

Rethinking Conquest

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Rethinking Conquest

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from Byzantium to Islam

Edited by
Mehmetcan Akpınar and Federico Montinaro

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Introduction

In the summer of 2017, one of the editors of the present volume had the privilege to pick up Walter Kaegi at Stuttgart airport. He was booked to give the keynote talk at the Tübingen conference ‘The Battle of Yarmūk (636 CE): Rethinking ‘Conquest’ in the Late Antique Near East from Byzantium to Islam’ of which the volume represents, in part, the proceedings. He had come straight from Chicago for the occasion. In the half-hour ride from the airport to the small university town on the river Neckar, Kaegi pulled an USB-Stick from one of the many pockets of his vest and announced laconically, but with childlike enthusiasm: ‘I got this from NASA’. The content of the device were *extremely* detailed satellite pictures of the few square miles of the Ḥa-wrān plain where the battle on the river Yarmūk (15 AH/636 AD), which in many respects decided the geopolitical fate of the Early Medieval Near East, is generally believed to have taken place. Three days later, a packed audience gathered in the spacious tower room, kindly put at our disposal by the Protestant Seminary, which had once hosted Johannes Kepler and Friedrich Schelling. For over an hour, they listened in awe to Kaegi, who spoke in great detail about those pictures and painstakingly reconstructed what he believed to have been the order of battle at the Yarmūk some fourteen hundred years earlier.

Walter Kaegi (Fig. 1) would have proudly subscribed to the ‘positivistic’ school of historians of the Early Islamic conquests who have traditionally been more interested in establishing first and foremost something one might label ‘what actually happened’ and are addressed by Fred Donner in the introductory chapter. Surely, this is not to say that Kaegi would have been opposed to ‘interpreting’ those events or putting them in broader context, historically and historiographically, as he in fact did in many of his writings. In this sense he would perhaps also have admitted that a ‘conquest’, as a historiographical object, is an especially tough cookie. It is, to begin with, in most cases, a large and complex one: Not one battle, not one siege, not one military unit, not one theater of war, not one way of waging war, not one or even just two peoples, not one motive, but several or many of all those items are involved, spanning, (and quite possibly changing over) an extended period of time. There are backgrounds and aftermaths to be taken into account, with the danger of exponential growth of the information to be handled. Then there is, precisely, the interpretative level, the study of bias – that of our sources’ and our own, as future sources to new historians. This goes from basic realizations, like ‘what is conquest for me is loss to somebody else’, through negotiating between differing semantics of ‘conquest’, to more complex and interdisciplinary interrogations concerning perspective, identity and focus: to what extent can a source or set of sources be regarded as representative of what section of what party or society?



Fig. 1: Walter Kaegi in Tübingen, summer 2017 (Photo by F. Montinaro).

During the Early Middle Ages, Muslim authors started narrating events such as battles and sieges, with the intention of glorifying Muslim military triumphs, particularly highlighting victories in specific localities where Muslims achieved dominance over others. Initially, these events were described using terms like *ghazwa*, *maghāzī* or *sariyya*. However, as Arabic historiography evolved, these terms were gradually replaced by the more commonly used term *fath*, meaning ‘opening,’ and its plural form *futūḥ*, referring to the broader phenomenon of the Muslim conquests and the acquisition of vast territories resulting from extensive military campaigns in the seventh century. This term, now recognized as the label of a distinct genre within Arabic historiography, began to be used as the title for books on the subject from the eighth century onwards. This allowed Muslim historians to retell these campaigns as part of a grand narrative that aimed to justify Muslim rule over non-Muslims, presenting it as a manifestation of divine favor towards the ‘conquerors’ over the ‘conquered’ people.

The Byzantines, by contrast, never really had a ‘conquest’ genre. One could easily point to the fact that they did not really achieve much in the direction of conquering since the sixth century. Then Justinian I’s reconquest of large parts of what had been the Roman Empire in North Africa and the West from the Goths and Vandals had been immortalized in one single monumental work *On the wars* by Procopius of Caesarea, arguably the last classical, or at least ‘classicizing’ historian of antiquity.¹ Yet the eighth and last book of that work is more of a testament to the author’s disillusion than a celebration of its imperial hero. The closest event to a Byzantine conquest thereafter is, again, a reconquest, that of Crete, from the Muslims, in 960–961. Now this is mainly documented in the most typical of Middle Byzantine universal chronicles: a contextualization of history, from creation, within

¹ See F. Montinaro/M. Meier (eds), *A Companion to Procopius of Caesarea*, Leiden 2022.

God's plan, yet in an account modeled precisely on Procopius' older masterpiece.² This is not to say that the Byzantines did not conceive of a military victory as truly a manifestation of God's favor, let alone that they were pacifists. Closer in time to the period under examination in this volume are Heraclius's exploits against the Persians in the East (once again, mainly a reconquest), which preceded the Muslim expansion by a few years. His achievements were celebrated in contemporary court poetry suffused with religious tones yet also filled with mythological imagery - and so was, in part, the above-mentioned reconquest of Crete over two centuries later. But the very title of a poem on the latter, *Halōsis*, 'capture', leaves no doubt as to that the Byzantines' view of conquests remained, on balance, political.

This volume aims, on the one hand, to record aspects of the wide-ranging conversation around the topic of 'conquest' that took place at the Tübingen meeting, intersecting the trajectory of the many revisions which have affected Byzantine and Early Islamic historiography in recent decades. On the other hand, by including surveys that deal with interdisciplinary, general and theoretical issues and studies that engage in greater detail with the source material or groups thereof, we hope to offer our readers something they will view not simply as a 'mixed bag' but as a valuable guide to some of the most significant problems that face the historian of every extraction when approaching the events of the seventh century. As we have anticipated, Fred Donner's contribution sets the tone for this multifarious inquiry, not just by framing the debate within its ideological contours - and thereby, in our perception, going so far as to restate the case for a 'new', moderate, dispassionate 'positivism' - but first and foremost by introducing the readers in some detail to the problem of the sources and daring to ask the fundamental question about the nature of the Early Islamic conquests. We should not, Donner argues, let the aspect of military confrontation, so prominent in most narratives at hand, obscure other aspects of this phenomenon such as 'persuasion, concession, and mutual cooperation'. The numismatic evidence presented in this volume by Marcus Phillips and discussed below would indeed, on the face of it, appear to tilt the balance towards a smoother form of power transfer. The other contributions to this volume occupy precisely the sweet spot between the 'positivistic' and 'interpretative' approaches described by Donner. This reflects the persuasion of the editors that both approaches are not just valid and useful in themselves, but can profit from each other and are therefore not necessarily mutually exclusive, provided that we are aware of the limits and opportunities, as well as the constant progress achieved by each.

This balance is epitomized in Andrew Marsham's contribution, which features in the second part of the volume, on *Texts and contexts*. Marsham rehearses the long running debate on whether the conquest came, besides the divine plan, with a

² See A. Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Conquest of Crete (961 AD)*, Prokopios' *Vandal War*, and the Continuator of the *Chronicle* of Symeon, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 39 (2015), 302–311.

human one, so to speak. The author strikes a convincing compromise between favorers and deniers of the existence of such a central ‘strategy’, arguing that there were, in fact, several consecutive ‘strategies’ characterized by different degrees of coordination and centralization as a result of the conquerors’ adapting to changing circumstances, opportunities and needs from the early days of the conquest under the Prophet Muḥammad (d. 632) and Abū Bakr (r. 632–634), through consolidation under ‘Umar (r. 634–644) and ‘Uthmān (r. 644–656), to an apex – and relaxation – under Mu‘āwiya (r. 661–680). Switching the focus back from later understanding of conquest to motivation and execution, another important and possibly more controversial question still is bound to arise concerning the ambivalent link between the conquests of the seventh and eighth centuries and military *jihād* justified in the Qur’ān, as it is more systematically addressed in later Islamic juridical tradition.³ This ambivalence is palpable in one broader treatment of the subject, where, despite initial cautioning that ‘the label of jihad has been attached to the great Islamic conquests of the seventh and eighth centuries, but only long after the fact’ the reader is told that ‘one cannot reasonably doubt that this Qur’ānic material was instrumental in the great Muslim conquests’.⁴ What Marsham’s contribution shows among other things is that if such a link between the Qur’ānic *jihād* – or other, apocalyptic beliefs for that matter – and the conquest did exist, it played no appreciable role in the design according to which the latter appears, at each stage, to have unfolded.

Also in this section, Theresia Raum offers an important introductory assessment of conditions in the Byzantine Empire on the eve of the conquest. She shows that, victorious though the emperor Heraclius may have been following the return of the relic of the Cross from the Persians to Constantinople, he failed to regain a secure position in the Byzantine capital, owing to internal political and social developments by then largely beyond his control. James Howard-Johnston focuses on the Christian sources, offering a ‘recantation’ of his own reconstruction of the series of events marking the onset of the conquest and the early dating of the battle at the Yarmūk, which he had offered in his *Witnesses to a World Crisis*.⁵ This afterthought plays out through the reattribution of a key passage in the ninth-century *Chronicle* of Theophanes the Confessor, our main Byzantine source for the Early Medieval Near East, from one of its lost sources – an eighth-century Syriac chronicle today commonly attributed to Theophilus of Edessa – to another, which is – a continuation of the early seventh-century

³ See F. Donner, The Sources of Islamic Conceptions of War, in: J. Kelsay/J. T. Johnson (eds), *Just War and Jihad: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives on War and Peace in Western and Islamic Traditions*, New York/West Port 1991, 31–69.

⁴ D. Cook, *Understanding Jihad*, Berkeley/Los Angeles 2005, 2 and 30.

⁵ J. D. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century*, Oxford 2010.

Greek chronicle of John of Antioch.⁶ The reader is substantially left with which version of Howard-Johnston to pick, but also, and perhaps more importantly, with an implicit warning as to both the joys and the difficulties of *Quellenforschung*.

The third section in the volume, on *Discourses*, focuses on Christian literary reactions to the conquest. Wolfram Brandes delves into the interpretation and dating of one single text transmitted with the medieval oracles attributed to the Tiburtine Sibyl and which recent scholarship had sought to date to the period immediately after the conquest, in the reign of Constans II (641–668 or 669). Brandes convincingly argues that we are dealing, quite naturally, with a much later, ninth- or (in our view more probably) tenth-century text, very close, that is, to the origin of the Sibyl's tradition itself. By contrast, Luise Frenkel is in her contribution rather concerned with 'undating the sources', attempting to show, that is, that however one would want to highlight their *Sitz im Leben*, contemporary Orthodox observers were heavily influenced by more or less recent literary developments proper to their environment in their way of framing the conquest. Since Averil Cameron, much has been said about the apparent 'liturgification' of Byzantine culture and society in Late Antiquity, and possibly even more about the 'apocalyptic mode,' as proposed by Donner and others in characterization of the early Muslim community (umma). By the reign of Heraclius, and as the Empire faced the Persians, the Byzantines seem to have deeply sunk into this mode, and paid greater attention to real or alleged transformations in the imperial office.⁷ Now if unity is at all to be expected for this section of our volume, it is our perception that the authors substantially depart from this path, by isolating trends spatially and temporally and thereby all in all downplaying, rightly in our view, the meaning of transmitted liturgizing texts and apocalyptic literature for our understanding of an early Christian response at large to events in the East. The results of this exercise are for the Byzantine side similar in essence to those of Marsham's comments on the conquest's strategy for the Muslim one: Not only the act of war but also its exegesis were, in the seventh and eighth centuries, overwhelmingly pragmatic efforts.

The fourth part, on *Realia*, includes Robert Schick's magisterial assessment of the literary evidence for the conquest of Southern Jordan – the first Byzantine area to fall to the Muslims – against the extant archaeological record, including the results of recent surveys and excavations. The discussion of the post-conquest Syrian numismatic evidence by Marcus Phillips is in many respects the summation of a career's work, which we are simply honoured to be entrusted with publishing. Among the many intertwined issues at

⁶ See now F. Montinaro/M. Jankowiak, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, in: R. Tocci (ed.), *A Companion to Byzantine Chronicles*, Leiden 2025, 325–346.

⁷ See, for example, M. Meier, *Liturgisierung und Hypersakralisierung: zum Bedeutungsverlust kaiserlicher Frömmigkeit in Konstantinopel zwischen dem 6. und 7. Jahrhundert n. Chr.*, in: N. Schmidt/A. Neuwirth (eds), *Denkraum Spätantike. Reflexionen von Antiken im Umfeld des Koran* (Episteme in Bewegung 5), Wiesbaden 2016, 75–106.

stake when attempting to trace the transition from Byzantine, to imitative, to a fully autonomous Islamic coinage, as addressed in this contribution, we would like to highlight here one, which is arguably the most puzzling. In fact, Phillipps himself was among the first scholars to point it out in a seminal 1997 article, namely the apparent continued supply of Byzantine ‘small change’ to the region up to ca. 670. Lacking other contemporary literary sources that would address the issue, there is no easy solution to the conundrum posed here by the numismatic evidence, which invites deeper reflection on our very understanding of broader questions relating to the role of the state in Early Medieval economies. Phillipps makes a strong case that Cyprus, occupied by the Arabs in the 640s and 650s to an extent that escapes us, played a pivotal role in the mysterious arrangements that brought to the Near East Constantinopolitan copper, going so far as to conclude that the latter ‘was deliberately sent to Cyprus with a view to exporting it to the mainland’. Whether the last stage of this exporting chain really need have been deliberate is a question that the reader will ask themselves. It is indeed possible to envision this supply as a benevolent if reluctant measure on the part of the Byzantine government intended to make sure that the left-behind Christian population could keep on conducting the business of every-day life, perhaps in exchange for, or at least in concomitance with, some guarantee of protection from their new rulers. In this connection, we would also like to mention the proposition made by Constantine Zuckerman, in the audience as Phillipps read his paper at the Tübingen conference. He suggested the existence of a network of moneychangers active between Cyprus and Syria operating quite independently from the state at a time in which the history of the island remains for us very obscure.⁸

Finally, the volume includes Kamil Choda’s standalone piece on *Reflections*, later transformations, that is, of Christian Byzantine conquest tropes a century after the conquest of the Near East, as the Muslims took over Visigothic Spain. Choda focuses on one of the two main contemporary witnesses to these latter events, the so-called *Continuatio Byzantia-Arabica* – a ‘continuation’, that is, as per the manuscripts, of an early seventh-century chronicle by the bishop John of Biclaro – composed in 741. Incidentally, this text is widely believed to have salvaged bits of Oriental material for the earlier conquests as well. The question of the author’s religious allegiance, Muslim or Christian, has long puzzled scholars. Choda now attempts, subtly, to demonstrate that he was a convert deploying a set of subtle, almost subliminal tactics in an attempt to gain new converts to his new faith. And we may just as well forward to our reader what Choda writes of the chronicle’s intended audience: ‘Die Leser sollten die Schlüsse daraus ziehen’!

⁸ On Cyprus in this period, see F. Montinaro, *Byzantium in the Reign of Constans II* (forthcoming).

Needless to say, this volume has no aspiration to offer a comprehensive picture of either the source material or the scholarship on its subject.⁹ We are particularly aware of a lack of discussion of the papyrological evidence.¹⁰ We would like to thank the University of Tübingen's Collaborative Research Center 923 'Threatened Orders' in the person of its then-speaker Ewald Frie, for financing the 2017 conference, with an additional contribution by the local Förderverein Geschichte, as well as the colleagues from the Institutes of Ancient History and the Department of Oriental and Islamic Studies, for their support and assistance. Viola Oßwald and Markus Kleemann helped copyediting the present volume, while Maren Biener and Leopold Luz prepared the index.

The 2017 Tübingen keynote talk was also Walter Kaegi's last. The condition which, already then, forced him to walk with the help of a three-prong cane, deteriorated swiftly upon his return to Chicago, following retirement in the same year and the death of his wife. He passed in early 2022, leaving a terrible void, but also many fond memories, in the hearts of family, friends, former students and colleagues. We dedicate this volume to him.

⁹ For some recent publications, see B. Shoshan, *The Arabic Historical Tradition and the Early Islamic Conquests. Folklore, Tribal Lore, Holy War*, London/New York 2016; H. Hassanein/J. Scheiner (eds), *The Early Muslim Conquest of Syria An English Translation of al-Azdi's Futūḥ al-Shām*, Abingdon/New York 2020.

¹⁰ On this see P. Booth, The conquest of Egypt reconsidered, in: C. Zuckerman (ed.), *Constructing the Seventh Century* (= Travaux et mémoires 17), Paris 2013, 639–670.



Part I: **The lay of the land**

Fred M. Donner

The conquests of the Arabian believers as historiographical concept and historical reality

Recent years have seen a marked shift in our understanding of what we usually call the Islamic conquests or the Arab conquests—a kind of shorthand term by which we refer to the rapid expansion of the “Believers’ movement” inaugurated by the Prophet Muḥammad (d. 632) in Arabia, which during the seventh century spread over much of the Near East. Actually, we are dealing with several shifts, affecting both our perception of the nature of the conquests, and the terminology used to describe them.

The first and most basic shift was much broader than the conquests alone, or even than early Islamic history, and might best be characterized as part of the move among historians generally away from the positivism of Leopold von Ranke, who saw the historian’s task as describing history “as it actually happened,” (*wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*).¹ The implication of such a view was that the past was something fixed and stable, which by persistent effort could be reconstructed, as one would put together pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. By the early and mid-twentieth century, however, many historians had come to accept in principle that the past could not be as neatly and definitively described as von Ranke’s dictum implied, and they acknowledged that our understanding of the past was always changing as our interpretive stance shifted with the passage of time.² The past was no longer seen as being like an object “out there” to be described, but was now understood to be a construction of the historian, one that could change with new evidence and new points of view. But the shift from a positivist to a more interpretive understanding of history did not take place all at once, in say 1905 or 1955; rather, it tended to be a gradual shift over time, and it occurred in “pockets” so that more positivistic works were still being produced while others adopted a freer interpretive perspective.³

1 L. von Ranke, *Geschichte der römischen und germanischen Völker*, vol. 7, quoted in E. G. Bourne, Leopold von Ranke, *The Sewanee Review* 4, 4 (August 1896), 390. The fuller quote, in translation, is as follows: “To history has been attributed the function to judge the past, to instruct ourselves for the advantage of the future. Such a lofty function the present work does not attempt. It aims to show how it actually took place.”

2 See, for example, R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, Oxford 1946, esp. 131–133, and E. H. Carr, *What Is History?*, Cambridge 1961. Other thinkers, as diverse as Karl Marx, Marc Bloch, Michel Foucault, and Hayden White, critiqued in different ways the positivist notion that historical writing can be “objective” or value-free.

3 For example, my own *Early Islamic Conquests* (positivistic, see below), written in the mid-late 1970s, after the publication of H. White, *Metahistory. The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Baltimore 1973.

The persistence of deeply positivistic historical writing is also understandable because on some level (not so much as historians, but simply as human beings) we require a certain amount of positivism in our perception of the world. That is, we need the basic belief that we can, within certain limits, understand “what happened” in the past. Without this basic positivistic outlook, I do not think we, or our societies, could function in life. Did I go to work yesterday, or did my neighbor actually tell me last week that the fence between our properties was in need of repair? Without the basic certainty that these events “actually happened” we would not be able to conduct ourselves from day to day. The adjudication of disagreements among people also depends on this belief that we (and others) can understand what has happened and can describe it, whether in a court of law or in a discussion over the dinner table. The question I would ask the historian who wishes to deny any role to positivism is, “Do you receive an electric bill every month for your home or apartment, and do you pay it?” I would venture that paying the bill is evidence of a practical, applied positivism, and that without that basic positivism one really cannot exist in the world.

In the field of early Islamic history, the shift from a comprehensive positivism to a more nuanced view of how Islamic history evolved occurred mainly in the second half of the twentieth century, and happened, by chance, to have overlapped almost exactly with the span of my own academic career, between about 1975 when I received my doctorate and the present. Indeed, the shift can be illustrated even in the titles of my own publications. My first book—the much-expanded version of my 1975 Princeton doctoral thesis—was *The Early Islamic Conquests*, published in 1981.⁴ Note the title: not “Views of the Early Islamic Conquests” or “An Interpretation of the Early Islamic Conquests,” or even “The History of the Early Islamic Conquests,” but simply *The Early Islamic Conquests*—as though somehow the actual phenomenon of the conquests was to be found between its covers. (I now imagine a reader opening the book for the first time and being astonished to see ranks of soldiers and troops of camels and horses and the din and chaos of combat pouring out from between the pages into his or her lap!) The title reflects the fact that I was, at that stage, still rather fully in “positivist mode”—as, I think, were most students of early Islam until the late 1970s. Following the classic positivist method of utilizing archival sources, I worked through the Arabic literary sources, which I took to be the earliest sources available, and mined them for information, which I then tried to assemble into a coherent story, marshaling scattered tidbits to fill out the picture and striving as much as possible to harmonize conflicting information. *The Early Islamic Conquests* thus epitomizes a kind of historiographical complacency that placed a great deal of trust in the sources and in our capacity to construct from those sources a picture of “what [I thought] had actually happened.”

⁴ F. M. Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, Princeton 1981.

The “revisionist wave” of scholarship on early Islam—which was in large part an insistence that we move beyond a positivist approach—hit with real force in the late 1970s with the publication of Patricia Crone’s and Michael Cook’s book *Hagarism: the making of the Islamic world*,⁵ but it was already beginning to stir in the works of Albrecht Noth in the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁶ And after the publication of *Hagarism*, most scholars of early Islam came to acknowledge—if, sometimes, only grudgingly—the fact that the Arabic sources, from which much of our information about the conquests comes, are not actually documents, i.e. not primary sources, but are themselves retrospective interpretations of the past. My own second book, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, published seventeen years after my *Conquests* book, adopted this perspective fully.⁷ With regard to the conquests, we came to see clearly that our sources were not simple collections of historical facts to be mined, but rather that they articulated what was to become one of the great themes of classical Islamic historiography, what I called the theme of *futūḥ*, usually translated simply as “conquests.” In fact, the term *fath* (pl. *futūḥ*) does not refer to the process of military confrontation, but rather to the working of God’s grace in facilitating the addition of new territories or cities to the growing caliphal state. Each instance of this was deemed to be evidence of God’s favor, a *fath* or bounty bestowed by God upon His Believers. The term *fath* itself is derived from the Qur’ān, and the conception underlying it—that the expansion of the community is part of a divine plan—derives from the realm of Qur’ān commentary as it developed in the eighth century.⁸

The emergence of the *futūḥ* concept in the Islamic community in the eighth century, and its articulation into the genre of *futūḥ* reports, had two implications—one reaching far into the future, right up until today, and another reaching back into the past.

First, the coalescence of the *futūḥ* as a concept became from that time onward one of the cornerstones of the Islamic community’s historiographical program and self-understanding. It portrayed the conquests as an almost miraculous and divinely-aided phenomenon, and so showed that the way the events of history unfolded revealed God’s favor for His chosen community. This, of course, contributed to the sense of solidarity and commitment successive generations of Muslims could feel in their faith and its doctrines. The conquests were nothing less than part of God’s wish

5 P. Crone/M. Cook, *Hagarism: the Making of the Islamic world*, Cambridge 1977.

6 Especially A. Noth, *Quellenkritische Studien zu Themen, Formen und Tendenzen frühislamischer Geschichtsüberlieferung*, Bonn 1973. See also his article *Iṣfahān-Nihāwand. Eine quellenkritische Studie zur frühislamischen Historiographie*, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 118 (1968), 274–296.

7 F. M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins. The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (= *Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam* 14), Princeton 1998.

8 F. M. Donner, Arabic *fath* as ‘conquest’ and its origin in Islamic tradition, *Al-ʿUṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* 24 (2016), 1–14.

to give His community dominion over the whole world, making submission or devotion to God's will (*islām*) universal, and thus ensuring the ultimate felicity of all those who were Believers, who would then enjoy the benefits of salvation in the afterlife.⁹ The *futūḥ* concept is thus salvation-historical, and some reports in the *futūḥ* literature purport to show how God favored the Muslims on the battlefield, for example by having angels intervene among the fighting forces, or by allowing Muslims to defeat much larger enemy forces in seemingly (or, sometimes, literally) miraculous fashion.

This concept of *futūḥ*—along with other concepts articulated about the same time, such as the validity of Muḥammad's prophecy, his foundation of a rightly-guided community, the continuity of that community, and so on—thus became, and has remained ever since, a basic component of Muslim identity.¹⁰ That was, indeed, its very purpose. The “heroic” events of the early expansion, the quasi-miraculous character of which revealed God's favor for Islam, have therefore been told and retold in every generation and have served as consolation for Muslims generally, and inspiration especially for rulers of large Muslim states such as the Ottoman empire, who attempted to frame their own expansionist ambitions in terms of this eternal salvation-historical program. It is therefore not surprising that the Ottoman sultans, when they took over a new area, issued what they called a *feth-nāme*, a decree establishing the regulations to be enforced in governing the new territory. Nor is it an accident that the Mughal emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605) in the sixteenth century called a short-lived new capital city Faṭḥpūr, “Victorious City” (later Faṭḥpūr Sikrī). The notion of *futūḥ* had become one of the central dimensions of Islamic statecraft.¹¹

With the rise of Arab nationalism in the twentieth century, names related to the conquests made the shift from Islamic discourse into Arab nationalist rhetoric.¹² Hence we find names like Yarmūk, or the name of the decisive battle in Iraq, al-Qādisiyya, or the names of conquest heroes like Khālīd b. al-Walīd in Syria or al-Muthannā b. Ḥāritha in Iraq, frequently drawn upon as designations of honor in the modern period. These include such things as the al-Muthannā and al-Qādisiyya Hospitals and al-Muthannā bridge in Baghdad, and several boys' schools named after al-Muthannā (in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar) or Khālīd b. al-Walīd (in Syria and Lebanon). As for Yarmūk, there is the Yarmouk University in Irbid, Jordan, Yarmūk neighborhoods in Baghdad and Kuwait, a Yarmūk refugee camp outside Damascus, a recently-established Salafist group in Syria called the Yarmūk Brigade or Yar-

⁹ Donner, *Narratives* (as footnote 7), 174–182.

¹⁰ The best-known exemplar of a large category of texts devoted to the conquests is probably al-Balādhurī's *Futūḥ al-buldān*; but the theme also figures in a major way in more comprehensive works, such as al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa l-mulūk*.

¹¹ See *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, online, s.v. *Faṭḥ-nāmeḥ* (G. L. Lewis); s.v. *Faṭḥpūr Sikrī* (unattributed).

¹² This complex relationship was nicely articulated in W. Ende, *Arabische Nation und islamische Geschichte: die Umayyaden im Urteil arabischer Autoren des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Beirut/Wiesbaden 1977.

mūk Martyrs' Brigade, and—perhaps truest indicator of widespread public esteem—Yarmūk Football or Sports Clubs, the first of them founded in 1925, in Jordan, Syria, Kuwait, Libya, and Yemen.¹³

These usages show the continuing hold on the popular imagination, even today, of these names from the *futūḥ* concept that was first articulated over a thousand years ago.

So much for the first implication of the coalescence of the *futūḥ* concept, reaching from the eighth century right down to the present. The second implication, which stretches from the concept's crystallization in the eighth century and later back into the seventh century, is just as significant: it is the fact, unwelcome to the historian, that much of the information about the conquests that we find in our Islamic literary sources is a product of the *futūḥ* genre, and not authentic early information, independently transmitted, that might really tell us "what actually happened" during the conquests. The "revisionist wave" that came over the field of early Islamic history in the 1970s was fundamentally an insistence that we understand more fully the literary character of the Arabic-Islamic narrative compilations that are our main sources of information on the conquests (as on much else in the early Islamic period), and that we understand the forces that brought these compilations and the reports they contain into existence. These understandings, in turn, have had the effect of tempering our confidence in the evidentiary value of these sources. We now realize that we cannot simply quote a report about the conquests found in a ninth or tenth century or later compilation as if it is factual, but must first subject the report—and the compilation in which it is found—to a thorough and sometimes agonizing tradition-critical analysis. When was a report first put into circulation? Who first put it into circulation, and in what intellectual context? What objective or agenda was the report intended to satisfy? Why, and by whom, was it transmitted further? How did it end up in the compilation where we now find it? And what were the goals or agenda of this compilation and its compiler?

These questions are obviously ones that can be explored best through careful analysis of a range of sources, and they opened up not one but two fields of research, each of which has become a virtual scholarly industry since the 1970s. One is the study of the compilations in which conquest reports are contained—including the so-called "universal" histories like those of al-Ṭabarī (d. 923) or al-Ya'qūbī (d. 897), or compilations focused specifically on the *futūḥ* genre like Ibn A'tham's (d. 926) *Kitāb al-futūḥ*, or other kinds of collections, such as the massive biographical dictionary of Ibn 'Asākir (d. 1175), the *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, which includes much information on key individuals participating in the conquests. We have moved beyond the naïvely positivistic assumption of many years ago that such compilations were merely "neu-

¹³ These examples and others can most easily be traced today on the Internet by searching names such as "al-Muthannā" or "Yarmūk."

tral” repositories of reliable reports available to the compilers, sort of like an archive. Rather, we now take for granted that each compilation was shaped by the compiler’s distinctive agenda and goals, and we must strive to deduce just what that controlling agenda may have been, since it very likely determined how, and even whether, the compiler included a report available to him from an earlier transmitter. Did he include a report in full, or edit part of it out, or suppress the report entirely? And why? For example, we know that al-Ṭabarī included hundreds of reports on the battles of Yarmūk and al-Qādisiyya; but we discover that in the thousands of pages of his chronicle, he mentions the city of Toledo in Spain only once,¹⁴ and that is a brief report that describes how Mūsā b. Nuṣayr sent Ṭāriq b. Ziyād in the year 711 to conquer it. We might be tempted to deduce many things from this: what material was available to al-Ṭabarī, or what was not available to him, or his motivations. But given that he offers no further remarks on anything about Toledo’s history prior or subsequent to its conquest, it seems especially clear that the agenda of the *futūḥ* genre—to measure the steady expansion of what came to be known among Islamic legal thinkers as the *dār al-islām*, the “abode of Islām” or realm ruled by the Islamic community,¹⁵ starting from the time of the prophet—was one of fundamental concern to al-Ṭabarī, and the reason we find this report, and so many others from the genre, in his compilation. Far from being a “neutral” repository of available information, in other words, al-Ṭabarī’s collection is powerfully shaped by the key themes/genres in which he was interested, including the *futūḥ* theme, but contains relatively little beyond them. We have scores or reports on the conquest of various places, but almost nothing, for example, on events in those places after their conquest, or the social or economic situation in them—not even for major towns such as Damascus, Ḥimṣ, Jerusalem, Beirut, Baṣra, or Fuṣṭāṭ, despite the fact that they played a central role in the history of the early Islamic community. Such events and information were not part of one of the central themes of Islamic historiography—whereas *futūḥ* reports were.

Knowing the agendas of these compilations can thus help us understand how our picture of the past may be skewed by the compilers’ selectivity in choosing among reports available to them, and in arranging or editing them to suit their purposes. Happily, we are seeing more studies of such compilations and their compilers and are no longer content—as historians were for far too long—simply to mine such compilations for the individual accounts they contain. Starting already in the late 1960s with

14 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, *Annales quos scripsit Abu Djafar Mohammed Ibn Djarir At-Tabari*, Leiden 1879–1901, vol. 2, 1253–1254 (<al-Wāqidi).

15 The notion of the *dār al-islām*, the “domain of Islam,” as opposed to the *dār al-ḥarb*, the “domain of war,” crystallized during the eighth century in discussions among Muslim jurists concerned with the duty of *jihād* in the sense of warfare against non-Muslim enemies, and is first clearly visible in the writings of the jurist Abū Yūsuf (d. 798). See F. M. Donner, *The Development of the Concepts of dār al-islām and dār al-ḥarb*, in preparation.

works by E. Pedersen, M. Hodgson and the aforementioned A. Noth,¹⁶ and since the 1970s with studies by U. Sezgin, T. Khalidi, S. Leder, H. Motzki, J. Lindsay, A. Görke, B. Shoshan, H. Kennedy, I. Lindstedt, S. Judd and J. Scheiner,¹⁷ and others, we have an increasing number of careful studies of specific compilers and compilations that can help us grasp the strengths and weaknesses of such works.

So much for the first scholarly “industry” generated by the awareness that our main Islamic sources for the conquests, and for early Islam generally, are literary compilations conforming to the *futūḥ* genre. The other such “industry” is the study of discrete reports contained in these later compilations, in an effort to pin down just when, where, by whom, and why such reports were first put into circulation—and thereby, ideally, to be able to gain some idea of the likely accuracy of such reports as evidence for “what actually happened.” This branch of scholarship has also become quite active since the 1970s; using the so-called *isnād-cum-matn* approach, which examines clusters of traditions of related content, scholars such as M. Schöller, A. Görke and G. Schoeler, and H. Motzki, working on reports about the life of the Prophet, have succeeded in identifying early strata of reports dating to the latter half of the first Islamic century, i.e. the late seventh and early eighth century CE.¹⁸ However, making a thorough analysis of a group of related traditions is a forbiddingly complex undertaking, so progress is slow and the results sometimes quite modest. Moreover, early reports on the conquests are not as numerous or full as those about the prophet, which limits the effectiveness of the method when applied to the *futūḥ* material. J. Scheiner’s detailed analysis of reports about the conquest of Damascus is the most ambitious ef-

16 E. L. Petersen, *‘Alī and Mu‘āwīya in early Arabic tradition: studies on the genesis and growth of early Islamic historical writing until the end of the ninth century*, Copenhagen 1964; M. G. S. Hodgson, *Two Pre-Modern Muslim Historians: Pitfalls and Opportunities in presenting them to Moderns*, in: J. U. Nef (ed.), *Towards World Community*, The Hague 1968, 53–68; A. Noth, *Quellenkritische Studien* (as footnote 6).

17 U. Sezgin, *Abū Miḥnaf*, Leiden 1971; T. Khalidi, *Islamic historiography: the histories of al-Mas‘ūdī*, Albany, N.Y., 1975; S. Leder, *Das Korpus al-Haitam ibn ‘Adī (st. 207/822): Herkunft, Überlieferung, Gestalt früher Texte der Aḥbār Literatur*, Frankfurt 1991; H. Motzki, *Die Anfänge der islamischen Jurisprudenz: ihre Entwicklung in Mekka bis zur Mitte des 2./8. Jahrhunderts*, Stuttgart 1991 (a study of ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī’s *Muṣannaḥ*); J. E. Lindsay (ed.), *Ibn ‘Asākir and early Islamic history*, Princeton 2001; A. Görke, *Das Kitāb al-amwāl des Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim ibn Sallām: Entstehung und Überlieferung eines frühislamischen Rechtswerk*, Princeton 2003; B. Shoshan, *The Poetics of Islamic historiography: deconstructing al-Ṭabarī’s History*, Leiden 2004; H. N. Kennedy (ed.), *Al-Ṭabarī: a medieval Muslim historian and his work*, Princeton 2008; I. Lindstedt, *The Transmission of al-Madā’inī’s material: historiographical studies*, Helsinki 2013; S. Judd/J. Scheiner (eds), *New Perspectives on Ibn ‘Asākir in Islamic historiography*, Leiden/Boston 2017.

18 M. Schöller, *Exegetisches Denken und Prophetenbiographie: eine quellenkritische Analyse der Sira-Überlieferung zu Muḥammads Konflikt mit den Juden*, Wiesbaden 1998; A. Görke/G. Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte über das Leben Muḥammads. Das Korpus ‘Urwa ibn al-Zubair*, Princeton 2008; H. Motzki, *Reconstruction of a source of Ibn Ishāq’s life of the Prophet and early Qur’ān exegesis: a study of early Ibn ‘Abbās traditions*, Piscataway, N. J., 2017.

fort of this kind to date; it examines over two thousand discrete accounts and totals over 800 pages.¹⁹ The tremendous effort required to disentangle all these reports is characteristic—there are no analytical short-cuts in dealing with this material. We have heard several papers at this conference whose authors undertake the Herculean task of sifting through groups of related accounts in an effort to identify the earliest stratum of material, and on this basis to say something meaningful about the topic at hand. That is, they hope to say something that can be plausibly identified as the earliest layer of information, not a historiographical trope resulting from the demands of a later genre. As Scheiner points out in dealing with the conquest of Damascus, however, the earliest versions of reports about that conquest cannot be traced back any further than the second quarter of the second century AH (middle decades of the eighth century CE), fully a hundred years after the events of the conquest. This is not to say that such reports may not be in fact older, but given the limitations of the material, the *isnad-cum-matn* method cannot trace them beyond this *terminus ante quem*. Whether this holds true for all reports about the conquest, and not just for Damascus, remains to be seen, but most other episodes in the conquests are less well described than the conquest of Damascus, so the outlook is not encouraging. As Scheiner points out, for the conquests we have not yet been able to bridge what in 1970 the Tübinger Islamicist R. Paret memorably called “The Gap in the Tradition about earliest Islam.”²⁰ So the question still looms: knowing as we now do the decisive role played by the “conquest concept,” the *futūḥ* genre, in the construction of the extant narratives about the conquests, will it ever be possible for us to describe “what actually happened” in the conquests on the basis of information from the Arabic literary sources? Or will we only be able to say what Muslims of a century later thought, or wanted us to believe?

Evidence from outside the historiographical genre of *futūḥ* literature may be helpful. Actual documents surviving from the conquest era or shortly after it, few though they are, provide us with sometimes vital fixed points of stable information. For example, our narrative sources about Iraq in the years following the first conquest make much of the role of the Thaqafī *Wunderkind* Ziyād b. Abīhi (“son of his father”), an erstwhile backer of the caliph ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (r. 656–661). The *amīr al-mu’minīn* Mu’āwiya (r. 661–680) won the talented Ziyād over to his side by recognizing him as his half-brother, essentially elevating him from ignoble lineage to elite status by making him a member of the Umayyad family. The story of his adoption by and later service for Mu’āwiya seems consistent in tone with many other reports in the sources, and on that basis alone we might be inclined to view it skeptically, as a kind

¹⁹ J. Scheiner, *Die Eroberung von Damaskus*, Leiden 2010.

²⁰ R. Paret, Die Lücke in der Überlieferung über den Urislam, in: F. Meier (ed.), *Westösliche Abhandlungen Rudolf Tschudi zum siebzigsten Geburtstag überreicht von Freunden und Schülern*, Wiesbaden 1954, 147–153. See comments of Scheiner, *Die Eroberung von Damaskus* (as footnote 19), 477.

of idealized “morality tale.”²¹ However, the existence of a coin issued in Baṣra and its dependencies, bearing the inscription “Ziyād b. Abī Sufyān,” confirms at once the existence of Ziyād as a historical figure, his status as governor, and his adoption by Mu‘āwiya.²² Unfortunately, such blazing shafts of light from actual documents are extremely few and far between—but they are a help. We cannot jump from such documentary confirmations of the content of a particular report in the narrative sources to wholesale acceptance of everything these sources say; but, at the same time, these confirmations suggest that there is, in fact, a substantial factual basis to at least some of what the narrative sources tell us, so that wholesale rejection of them would be as unwarranted as wholesale acceptance. We can hope, then, that with time, further documentary information, and building on it further careful analysis of the narrative reports, will allow us gradually to discern at least the outlines of “what actually happened.”

Similarly, many non-Arabic and non-Muslim reports—particularly those from the Syriac tradition, about which M. Penn has recently written²³—offer us valuable insights into how the conquerors were seen by others at the time of the conquests, or shortly thereafter. This material (whether Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, Greek, or other) is also mostly literary in character and so poses its own historiographical challenges, but some of these literary sources crystallized earlier than the earliest extant Arabic-Islamic traditions, and in any case they pose different historiographical issues than those raised by the Islamic sources. So they provide us with a different perspective on events, or sometimes with what appears to be a virtually documentary confirmation of a date or event, such as the notation on the fly-leaf of an early Syriac manuscript which appears to confirm the date of a great battle at Jābiya—presumably referring to the battle of Yarmūk.²⁴ Many of these diverse non-Muslim sources have been collected in recent compilations, which make consulting them far easier, and these compilations usually include some discussion of the strengths and limitations of these sources.²⁵

21 E.g. al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh* (as footnote 14), vol. 2, 69–70, and 71–73, on Ziyād’s adoption by Mu‘āwiya and his appointment as governor of Baṣra.

22 See for example American Numismatic Society coin 1944.100.51228, silver drachm minted in 52AH/672 CE in Hamadhān in the Jibāl, in the name of Ziyād b. Abī Sufyān; or another in his name, ANS 1977.71.13, silver drachm minted in Kirmān in the same year. Both places were dependencies of Baṣra. (Search under www.numismatics.org.)

23 M. P. Penn, *When Christians First Met Muslims: A Source Book of the Earliest Syriac Writings on Islam*, Oakland 2015, and *Envisioning Islam: Syriac Christians and the Early Muslim World*, Philadelphia 2015.

24 See discussion in R. G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It. A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*, Princeton 1997, 116–117.

25 A. Palmer, *The Seventh Century in West-Syrian Chronicles*, Liverpool 1993; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam* (as footnote 24); Penn, *When Christians First Met Muslims* (as footnote 23).

The Syriac and other non-Muslim sources also help shed light on—or at least, complicate our understanding of—another aspect of the conquests about which we have hardly spoken so far, and a very important one at that. This is the vexing question of what, actually, was the nature of the conquest? What kind of historical phenomenon are we speaking about? First, in what measure was it actually a conquest—that is, a military confrontation—and in what measure was it the gradual expansion of a new political order into areas where the existing state structures were collapsing, or were weakened to the point of being irrelevant and ripe for replacement? I think the evidence that there were military confrontations of major consequence, such as the battle of Yarmūk, is too pervasive to dismiss as pure literary invention, but the nature of much of the broader expansion of the early community of Believers is I think less easy to characterize, and viewing it all simply as a movement of “conquest” may warp our perceptions by understating the degree to which persuasion, concession, and mutual cooperation were involved in the process.²⁶

Second, and even more vexing: what was the character of this movement of expansion that we variously call “the Islamic conquest,” “the Arab conquest,” or (as I would prefer) “the expansion of the Believers’ movement”?²⁷ Here the lack of any firm documentation produced by early members of the elites guiding the movement is crucially debilitating: we have no idea, really, why the leaders of this movement set it going, what their objectives were, whether and how those objectives evolved over time, etc. Was it, as the Islamic tradition assures us, an effort by members of a self-conscious new religious community to expand and vanquish other faiths? This seems more likely to be a back-projection from later times, especially because the slim documentation available suggests that the words “Islam” and “Muslim” were not used to designate the conquerors or their movement, by themselves or others, for at least a century. (Even in the Qur’ān, the word “*islām*” generally means “submission to God’s will” or “devotion to God,” and does not refer to a new religion.)²⁸ Was the expansion mainly of a political sort, a seizure of control by a new confederation of tribal groups bound together by some kind of pan-tribal ethnic or linguistic identity? Unfortunately, there is very little evidence for such an ethnic (“Arab”) component at least for the duration of the seventh century.²⁹ The scant documentation the conquerors did leave, and the Qur’ān, suggest that the conquerors called themselves, and so thought of themselves, as “Believers” (*mu’minūn*). But what exactly did that mean, and what were the boundaries demarcating Believers from others? And how was this identity

²⁶ I develop this notion in *Visions of the Islamic Expansion: Between the Heroic and the Horrific*, in: N. M. El Cheikh/S. O’Sullivan (eds), *Byzantium in Early Islamic Syria*, Beirut/El Koura 2011, 9–29.

²⁷ On this problem of nomenclature, see F. M. Donner, *Talking About Islam’s Origins*, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 81 (2018), 1–23.

²⁸ F. M. Donner, *Dīn, islām, und muslim im Koran*, in: G. Tamer (ed.), *Die Koranhermeneutik von Günter Lüling*, Berlin 2018, 129–140.

²⁹ P. Webb, *Imagining the Arabs: Arab Identity and the Rise of Islam*, Edinburgh 2018.

as Believers able to hold together all those who took part in the expansion, which continued for several generations? We can assume that, as with all mass social and political movements, individuals joined the movement for a diverse variety of reasons: some joined out of pure idealism and commitment to “the cause”, whatever it was; others, however, were drawn to it simply in pursuit of worldly gain—plunder, rape, seizing land, excitement, social advancement. Still others probably joined for a combination of idealistic and material incentives, or from social pressure, or they joined reluctantly but became swept up in the enthusiasm and momentum of it all. However, these remain but speculations, because in the total absence of personal memoirs or other reliable testimony we have no way of knowing just what motivated individuals, particularly those leading the movement, to embark on the conquests. How we would love to have a clutch of letters from the second caliph ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 634–644) to one of his generals, or even from a common soldier on campaign, to see how **they** conceived of what they were doing! But, of course we don’t; we can only attempt to fathom their motivations by resorting to circumstantial evidence. For example: it appears that the conquerors did not coerce the people they came to rule to “convert” to Islam, at least at first, and did not even encourage conversion—does this mean that purely religious zeal was not the primary motivation for the movement, as some early Orientalists argued?³⁰ Or is it simply a reflection of the possibility that the religious formulation of this new movement as a distinct monotheistic confession was not yet complete, so that one might join the movement while remaining a Christian or a Jew? (In other words, the concept of “conversion” was at this stage irrelevant.) The Syriac writer Bar Penkayé, writing in the 680s, describes the rule of Mu‘āwiya as one of peace in Syria and Mesopotamia, and adds, almost complainingly, that Mu‘āwiya let everyone worship as they pleased³¹—certainly, for this non-Chalcedonian Christian, a change from conditions under Byzantine rule. Does this mean that the new regime was not interested in religion at all? Or was the goal simply one of establishing what its architects hoped would be a more God-guided public domain than those of the Byzantines and Sasanians, a righteous new order in which pious Believers could live in a manner that allowed them to attain salvation in the afterlife, but did not require the conversion of those who were already monotheists? The *futūḥ* reports, with their insistent back-projection of a sharply-defined Muslim religious identity, are not of much help in tackling such questions, but the non-Muslims sources, and the evidence of actual documents (of which, of course, we hope many more remain to be discovered) may help us around this impasse. At least we can hope so, and if they do, we may finally make some real progress in describing the conquests—“as they actually were.”

³⁰ E.g., the views of L. Caetani, C. H. Becker, F. Gabrieli, and others, summarized in Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests* (as footnote 4), 4–6.

³¹ See the translation in Penn, *When Christians First Met Muslims* (as footnote 23), 92.



Part II: **Texts and contexts**

Andrew Marsham

Were there strategic considerations in the seventh-century Arabian conquests?

Introduction

The question of the seventh-century “Arab conquests” is one of a comparatively small set of problems in Islamic History that has received prolonged and sustained attention from historians.¹ The early-to-mid twentieth century saw a turn towards materialist explanations for the conquests, with ecological and economic change often being seen as the primary cause of both the conquests and the migrations of the Arabian tribes; the latter part of that century, and the beginning of the twenty-first, has seen a return to explanations grounded in “state” organisation, ideology and culture, alongside re-appraisals of the evidence for early Islam and its interpretation.² Advances in the understanding of the sources allow for a more detailed picture of aspects of the very early Islamic period. The same advances have also helped to begin to reframe that picture in two important ways. First, greater attention is now paid to the wider Late Antique context in which the conquests took place; second the teleologies inherent in an Arabic historical tradition set down in its extant forms more than 150 years after the conquests it describes are now considered more carefully.³

In recent decades, influential contributions on the question of the organisation and direction of the conquests of the 630s and early 640s were made by Fred Donner in his 1981 book on the conquests and then in his 1995 article, “Centralized authority

1 I would like to thank all the organisers and the participants at “The Battle of Yarmūk (636 CE): Rethinking ‘conquest’ in the Late Antique Near East from Byzantium to Islam”, Tübingen, 16–17 June 2017 and the editors of this volume. In addition, I would like to thank Harry Munt and Nicola Clarke and colleagues at the Late Antique and Medieval Middle East in Cambridge work-in-progress reading group for their criticisms and comments. All remaining errors are of course my own.

2 See the surveys in F. M. Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, Princeton 1981, 3–7 and F. M. Donner, Centralized Authority and Military Autonomy in the Early Islamic Conquests, in: A. Cameron (Ed.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East III: States, Resources and Armies*, Princeton 1995, 337–360, here 267–270.

3 On the teleologies, see A. Al-Azmeh, *The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity: Allah and His People*, Cambridge 2014; F. M. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London 2010; P. Webb, *Imagining the Arabs: Arab Identity and the Rise of Islam*, Edinburgh 2016. All three publications call into question later categories: ‘Islam’ in the case of Al-Azmeh and Donner and ‘Arabs’ in the case of Webb. For a recent assessment of the literary character of the sources for Muḥammad, see S. W. Anthony, *Muhammad and the Empires of Faith: The Making of the Prophet of Islam*, Oakland 2020.

and military autonomy.”⁴ In his article, Donner pursues in some detail the case in favour of a degree of centralised strategic thinking and organisation in the 630s and early 640s. He pays close attention to the revisionist perspectives that had cast doubt on the Arabic historical tradition’s representations of caliphal authority and direction. However, Donner finds scepticism about some centralised directing organisation in the first conquests difficult to square with the evidence.⁵ He presents a conceptual framework for thinking about centralised control in the conquests, with “conceptual,” “strategic-operational”, and “tactical,” levels. He leaves aside the conceptual, while implicitly assuming that there was indeed an ideological foundation for coherent strategic behaviour (as he had proposed in his 1981 book and as he elaborates in other recent publications).⁶ He also notes that highly centralised control over tactical matters – the details of logistics and battles – is most unlikely. That leaves “strategic and operational” centralisation – that is, higher-level planning and its implementation. Donner finds that both are present during the leadership of ‘Umar (r. 634–644) and the first half of ‘Uthmān’s rule (c. 644 to c. 650). This of course was the phase of expansion by the West Arabians’ armies into territories in the Fertile Crescent, Egypt and parts of Iran, formerly controlled by the Romans and Sasanians.

Walter Kaegi and James Howard-Johnston broadly agree with Donner’s assessment. Indeed, they still accord less weight to the arguments of the revisionists and make bolder claims about the extent of strategic organisation and centralisation and the consistency of strategic goals. Howard-Johnston is also concerned with the whole of the seventh century, rather than simply the first decade of the conquests.⁷ Howard-Johnston describes centralised strategy thus:

. . . Muslim field forces were subjected to direction by a higher, central authority. Their operations were well coordinated. Troops were mobilized in large numbers . . . and were deployed in designated theatres of war, processes which required considerable organizational skill. There is also clear evidence of strategic direction on a grand scale, manifest in the concentration of forces against a

4 Donner, *Conquests* (as footnote 2); Donner, *Centralized Authority* (as footnote 2). The bulk of the article was written in 1992, with some revisions in 1993 and 1994: Donner, *Centralized Authority*, 263.

5 It is also worth noting P. Crone does not deny that ideology and political unification were crucial impulses in the conquests: P. Crone, *The Evolution of the Early Islamic Polity*, Cambridge 1980, 25–26. However, she is very sceptical about the sources’ record of this process: Crone, *Evolution*, 3–18. E. Landau-Tasseron arrives at similar conclusions: E. Landau-Tasseron, *From Tribal Society to Centralized Polity: An Interpretation of Events and Anecdotes from the Formative Period of Islam, Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 24 (2000), 180–216, here 180–182.

6 Donner, *Conquests* (as footnote 2), 55–62; Donner, *Believers* (as footnote 3), 56–89.

7 J. D. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century*, Oxford 2010; W. E. Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*, Cambridge 1992. See also H. Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs: Military and Society in the Early Islamic State*, London 2001, 2–6, and R. G. Hoyland, *In God’s Path: The Arab Conquests and the Creation of an Islamic Empire*, Oxford 2014; both of whom follow Donner, *Conquests* (as footnote 2).

succession of prime targets in the early phase of expansion (632–52)—first the principal refractory regions of Arabia, then Roman Palestine and Syria, Sasanian Mesopotamia, and, finally, Iran. Most impressive of all was the ability of the Caliph ‘Uthman to institute a general reorientation of the outward offensive thrust after the death of Yazdgerd had sealed Muslim hegemony in Iran.⁸

Kaegi’s contribution is his emphasis on the Arabians’ oral intelligence networks, their use of diplomacy, and their negotiation with local elites as opposed to with Roman senior commanders. As Kaegi has it, “One might characterize this strategy as ‘salami slicing’ with the ultimate objective of the total reduction or disappearance of their opponents.” Kaegi also observes the Arabians’ capacity for strategic mobility, and the concentration of their forces effectively in the light of their intelligence, as happened at Yarmūk and other major engagements; to extend Kaegi’s metaphor, “salami slicing” was combined with chopping off much bigger chunks of territory when possible.⁹

Ella Landau-Tasseron is more sceptical about some of Donner’s conclusions. In her 2000 article, “From Tribal Community to Centralized Polity,” Landau-Tasseron expresses some doubt about the capacity of the leaders in Medina or their commanders to direct their armies, or even their troops on the battlefield.¹⁰ Her purview is also a little longer than Donner’s, going to the end of ‘Uthmān’s rule and glancing beyond that towards the eras of Mu‘āwīya (r. c. 661–680) and ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 685–705). Landau-Tasseron argues that, despite the serious problems with the sources, some patterns in the probably organisational structure of the polity can be identified, with the reign of ‘Uthmān standing out as one turning point – an ultimately failed attempt to assert centralised authority, which had been matched only in the very different circumstances of the time of the Prophet.¹¹

Probably Howard-Johnston and Kaegi both underestimate the discontinuity in strategic objectives over time and the autonomy of the army commanders; some of the on-going purpose and coordination which they observe may in fact be a consequence of the retrospective imposition of continuity of action and organisational coherence by the later sources. In contrast, Landau-Tasseron reissues the sceptics’ challenge in a more nuanced fashion, assuming that some conclusions can be drawn from the interests of the later tradition rather than from the specific details of their accounts.

In what follows it is argued that, while the evidence suggests a significant degree of centralised authority in the new Arabian monotheist polity, what changed over time was the balance of power between levels in the organisation of the “conquest society”, the degree of coordination between actors, and the actors’ various strategic

⁸ Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses* (as footnote 7), 471.

⁹ Kaegi, *Byzantium* (as footnote 7), 59, 239, quotation at 239.

¹⁰ Landau-Tasseron, *From Tribal Society* (as footnote 5), 200–202.

¹¹ Landau-Tasseron, *From Tribal Society* (as footnote 5), 182–183. Cf. Crone, *Evolution* (as footnote 5), 25–26 (but with much scepticism about the sources’ record of this process at 3–18).

objectives themselves. This is not to disregard crucial broader contextual factors, such as the ecological and economic changes of the sixth century, or the wars between the Romans and Sasanians, nor is it to dismiss the observations of the revisionists about the character of the sources and their conquest narratives.¹² But it is to acknowledge that the West Arabians responded to these contexts in an organised and coordinated fashion, which allowed for significant strategic thought and action. It is also suggested that a simple opposition between “centralisation” and more disorganised or opportunistic action is no longer appropriate; the very early Islamic movement probably had significant cultural and ideological cohesion among the small group of its most powerful leaders, which lent a degree of coherence to their actions within a relatively devolved and non-hierarchical structure. This combination of shared culture and ideology and devolved and relatively “flat” power structures had significant long-term consequences for the polity.¹³

A pattern of recurrent waves of centralisation and expansion, with attendant diffusion of power and agency, followed by further efforts at coordination and centralisation can be traced across a period of about sixty years. By examining this longer, sixty-year period, it is possible to pay attention to the various levels at which actors operated strategically within the new Arabian conquest society and to how the distribution of strategic influence and autonomy fluctuated as its circumstances and its structures were transformed.¹⁴ This chapter begins with the latter part of the era of Muḥammad (fl. c. 610–632) and Abū Bakr (r. 632–4), and moves through the rule of ‘Umar (r. 634–644), ‘Uthmān (r. 644–656), and the reassertion of unity under Mu‘āwiya (r. c. 661–680).

The approach to the sources aggregates the insights of recent scholarship that takes an interest in explaining the events of the seventh century in the Middle East. The underpinning argument is that the sources are susceptible to questions about ideology and organisation and that models from anthropology and the social sciences can help to interpret patterns and correlations in the evidence.¹⁵ Documentary or demonstrably early sources, including the Qur’ān and seventh-century chronicles are

12 On the volcanic event of the sixth century, climate change and plague, see A. J. McMichael, Insights from Past Millennia into Climatic Impacts on Human Health and Survival, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 109, 13 (2012), 4730–4737, here 4734–4735; L. B. Larsen et al., New ice core evidence for a volcanic cause of the A.D. 536 dust veil, *Geophysical Research Letters* 35, 4 (2008), <https://doi.org/10.1029/2007GL032450>; L. K. Little, *The Plague and the End of Antiquity: The Pandemic of 541–750*, Cambridge 2007. On the wars between the Roman and the Sasanian empires, see G. Greatrex, *Byzantium and the East in the Sixth Century*; Howard-Johnston (as footnote 7), 436–445 *et passim*.

13 Cf. A. Nef/M. Tillier, Introduction: Les voies d’innovation dans un empire islamique polycentrique, *Annales Islamologiques* 45 (2011), 1–19.

14 ‘Conquest society’ is from Crone, *Evolution* (as footnote 5), 27.

15 C. F. Robinson noted, “as long as our evidence remains so weak, the models we choose to apply will exert disproportionate power on our explanations”, C. F. Robinson, *Reconstructing Early Islam: Truth and Consequences*, in: H. Berg (ed.), *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins*, Brill

privileged, alongside the prosopographic and annalistic materials on commanders and campaigns, which appear to be relatively early layers of the later narrative tradition.¹⁶ It is assumed that no data point in the narrative tradition should be relied upon in isolation and also that much of the more interpretive framing of the prosopographic and chronological skeleton, including narratives about close caliphal direction of field commanders, is certainly secondary.¹⁷ In some cases, such as in questions of settlement patterns and administrative practice, archaeological, papyrological, and numismatic evidence provides insights not available from the narrative sources.

The last years of the Prophetic era and its immediate aftermath saw a concentration of ideological and organisational power in the hands of the Prophet and his closest associates. Indeed, this is one point on which most scholars of the period agree.¹⁸ The extent and direction of the Prophet and his Companions' strategic vision is not clear, but their most salient horizons for much of this period certainly lay within the Arabian Peninsula, for all that they were aware of events further afield and may have aspired to participate in them. It seems that they began to do so more directly at the very end of the 620s and beginning of the 630s, and that the need to reassert authority after the Prophet's death in 632 led to further involvement with Roman and Sasanian territories.¹⁹ Conquests beyond the Peninsula brought about a new situation, where the senior Arabian commanders in the former Roman and Sasanian lands of Syria and Iraq became powerful actors, with significant strategic autonomy. However, the leader of the whole polity (conventionally, "the caliph")²⁰ still seems to have exerted some influence over these provincial commanders. Some higher-level strategic plan-

2003, 101–134, here 131. Since then, some categories of sources have been more thoroughly explored and understood and some questions depend less on models than before.

16 On the documentary and non-Muslim sources see R. G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam As Others Saw It: A Survey of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*, Princeton 1997, and Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses* (as footnote 7) as well as Howard-Johnston in this volume. On the early layers of the tradition, see e.g. Crone, *Evolution* (as footnote 5); E. Zychowicz-Coghill, *The First Arabic Annals: Fragments of Umayyad History*, Berlin 2021.

17 A. Noth, with L. I. Conrad, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source-Critical Study*. Princeton 1994.

18 Landau-Tasseron, *From Tribal Society* (as footnote 5), 182–183, 191–195. Compare, for example, M. W. Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, Oxford 1961; Crone, *Evolution* (as footnote 5), 24–26 and Donner, *Believers* (as footnote 3), 56–89.

19 On this point about the so-called "Wars of Apostasy," see Donner, *Conquests* (as footnote 2), 85–90; E. S. Shoufani, *Al-Riddah and the Muslim Conquest of Arabia*, Toronto 1961.

20 "Caliph" was never the main, formal title of the Muslims' leader, which was "Commander of the Faithful" from 661 at the latest: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Third Edition*, online, s.v. (A. Marsham). When the title 'Caliph' (*khalifa*) was first used and with what sense is not clear, see A. Marsham, *God's Caliph Revisited: Umayyad Political Thought in Its Late Antique Context*, in: A. George/A. Marsham (eds), *Power, Patronage and Memory in Early Islam: Perspectives on Umayyad Elites*, Marsham, Oxford 2018, 3–38. The term is used here as a convenient shorthand, while acknowledging the potential anachronism.

ning took place, and the resources of the provinces were in part directed towards these ends. Then, from the 640s, members of the Umayyad clan began to use the Roman frontier as a foundation for their power within the new empire, and this in part explains particularly coordinated strategic action in the Mediterranean during the caliphate of ʿUthmān and even more during the first half of the caliphate of Muʿāwīya. The failure of the push to capture Constantinople in the late 660s contributed to the waning power of the aging Muʿāwīya in the 670s, and greater power for regional commanders in Egypt and Iraq. In this period, there was a more defensive stance towards the Roman Empire and new waves of settlement and frontier warfare in Ifrīqiya and Khurāsān, launched from Egypt and Iraq, respectively.²¹

Crucially, the core leadership of the monotheist movement was united by a shared ideology (the realm of the “conceptual” in Donner’s parlance). The idea of divinely-sanctioned warfare in order to establish “God’s rule” (*mulk Allāh*) on earth, with the associated concept of “migration” (*hijra*) to urban centres, inhabited and governed by “emigrants” (*muhājirūn*) were central to matters of military strategy; all three concepts appear to have been in place by the late 630s, and perhaps earlier in some form. Ideas about the use of wealth to support the migrants were also important.²² It was this shared ideology that lent a certain coherence to actions even when they were pursued relatively independently; more demonstrable cooperation and coordination between actors in different regions towards shared goals might be taken as evidence of higher-level strategic thinking and action, as can evidence of successful direction from the caliphal centre.

Tensions between impulses for political centralisation and those for more devolved independence of action played out over the six decades. As the reach of the new polity expanded from the few hundred kilometres around Medina to the 5,000-kilometre-wide band of territory between Carthage and Marw, so too did the challenges for those who sought to assert centralised control over it. Furthermore, the numbers of conquerors increased – the initial victories of the 630s were followed by a period of migration from the Peninsula into the new garrisons, especially in Iraq.²³ At

²¹ See further on these latter points, below, 40–44.

²² On *mulk Allāh*, see S. W. Anthony, Prophetic Dominion, Umayyad Kingship: Varieties of *Mulk* in the Early Islamic Period, in: A. Marsham (ed.) *The Umayyad World*, London 2021, 39–64; on Muḥammad’s followers’ labels for themselves, see I. Linstedt, *Muhājirūn* as a Name for the First/Seventh Century Muslims, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 74, 1 (2015), 67–73. On *hijra*, see P. Crone, First Century Concept of *Hiġra*, *Arabica* 41 (1994), 352–387; A. Marsham, *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy: Accession and Succession in the First Muslim Empire*, Edinburgh 2009, 97–102, with further references; A. Marsham, review of P. Crone, *From Arabian Tribes to Islamic Empire: Army, State and Society in the Near East C.600–850*, *Journal of Semitic Studies* 56, 1 (2011), 206–209. On wealth, see *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Third Edition*, online, s.v. *Fayʿ* (A. Marsham). For a review of these themes, see H. Munt, What did Conversion to Islam Mean in Seventh-Century Arabia?, in: A. Peacock (ed.), *Islamisation: Comparative Perspectives from History*, Edinburgh 2017, 83–101.

²³ Donner, *Conquests* (as footnote 2), 231–236, 245–250.

the same time, interactions between the Arabian conquerors and the large non-Arabian conquered populations multiplied. One of the most important outcomes of these changes was the enhanced military and organisational capacity of commanders in the provinces, with the result that the frontier province of Iraq and then – more permanently – the Syrian frontier province became centres for the new empire in the second half of the period, under ‘Alī (r. 656–661) and then under Mu‘āwiya. When this happened, the new resources of these former frontier regions made renewed and more effective efforts at strategic direction possible.

1 Muḥammad and Abū Bakr, c. 622–634

The 620s and early 630s, when the new Medinan polity took shape and extended its reach was an era of face-to-face leadership, over a comparatively small, institutionally light federation.²⁴ Command and control were dependent upon face-to-face negotiation and the co-option of existing tribal structures.²⁵ There is evidence for some concentration of ideological power at the centre of the polity in the hands of Muḥammad and his associates. This concentration had organisational, and so, in Donner’s terms, operational consequences. An organisation at this scale can act in a centrally-directed and focused manner – all the more so when its leaders are united by a shared ethos and world-view and are able to use existing cultural forms to re-shape the political world around them.²⁶

The most important evidence for these conceptual foundations is the Qur’ān, much of which appears to date from this period. While the process of the compilation of the Qur’ān is not yet well understood, the consonantal skeleton of the text was likely largely fixed by around 650.²⁷ Further, it does seem likely that the Qur’ān reflects ideas circulating among the leadership of the Medina polity during the Prophet’s lifetime. Indeed, a case can be made that some chronological sequence in the Qur’ān can be recovered and may well correlate with some of the traditional outline of the Prophet’s biography.²⁸ For the purposes of this discussion, it is enough to note that from the point of view of strategy and leadership in politics and war, ideas about the ultimate sovereignty of God, delegated to his Prophet and community, the Faith-

²⁴ Donner, *Conquests* (as footnote 2), 87 also treats this period as having many shared features.

²⁵ Marsham, *Rituals* (as footnote 22), 8–9, 54–57, 60–78, with references.

²⁶ See Landau-Tasseron (as footnote 5), 191–195 on the small group at the centre of the new organisation. On the state-like capacities of so-called ‘tribal’ societies, see D. Sneath, *The Headless State: Aristocratic Orders, Kinship Society, and Misrepresentations of Nomadic Inner Asia*, New York 2007.

²⁷ N. Sinai, When Did the Consonantal Skeleton of the Quran Reach Closure? Part I/Part II, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 77 (2014), 273–292; 509–521.

²⁸ See the discussion in N. Sinai, *The Qur’ān: A Historical-Critical Introduction*, Edinburgh 2017, 48–51, 111–137.

ful's stewardship of wealth and resources, as well as the obligation for political and military action to enact God's will, are all particularly prominent. Contractual political institutions are in evidence, details about specific strategic objectives less so.²⁹

One of the few political institutions clearly identified in the Qur'ān is "pledged allegiance" (*al-bay'a*), which appears as a verb six times in four places in the Qur'ān (Q 9:111, Q 48:10, Q 48:18, Q 60:12). By the latter years of the Prophet's life, when he was prosecuting successful war and diplomacy against the Meccans, his military command structure was built upon the institution of pledged allegiance and the obligation of obedience to him personally as a military commander. This was a modification of existing Arabian practices, as shaped by prevalent monotheist ideas about covenant and political unity. Similar pledges appear already to have been in use in South Arabia and would very likely have been familiar to the West Arabians and other Arabian groups. There are also parallels with the pledges taken to the leaders of coenobitic Christian associations in Upper Egypt as well as with Roman military oaths; these similarities likely reflect the interaction of the West Arabians with monotheist ideas and practices that were circulating widely in the Middle East.³⁰

While the institutional and conceptual frameworks for strategic action are quite prominent in the Qur'ān, matters of military strategy itself and strategic objectives are not.

Direct military action against the Romans and the Sasanians are not mentioned at all; the latter are absent from the Qur'ān, their priests appear only once, and the former is mentioned only briefly in one *sūra* that is usually dated to the late Medinan period.³¹ References to Jerusalem are comparatively oblique.³² The conflict with the Meccans is not addressed in terms that are unambiguous either, but the conventional reading has many Qur'ānic verses that relate to war and politics as addressing the conflict with Mecca after 622, and this reading does seem to fit best with the evidence,

29 *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, online, s.v. *Sovereignty* (B. Khir); s.v. *Wealth* (M. Bonner); s.v. *Contracts and Alliances* (W. Hallaq); s.v. *War* (P. Crone). On the silences in the Qur'ān, see F. Gabrieli, *Muhammad and the Conquests of Islam*, London 1968, 104.

30 Marsham, *Rituals* (as footnote 22), 21–59. Cf. Landau-Tasseron, *From Tribal Society* (as footnote 5), 185–187. In E. Landau-Tasseron, *The Religious Foundations of Political Allegiance: A Study of Bay'a in Pre-modern Islam*, Washington D.C. 2010, a case is made for less continuity from earlier Arabian institutions and less emphasis on military loyalty, but this seems to underestimate both the prevalence of monotheist ideas in late sixth and early seventh century Arabia and the central place of war in the materials relating to the pledges (and to pledged political loyalty in late antiquity more generally). T. Tesei, *Heraclius' War Propaganda and the Qur'ān's Promise of Reward for Dying in Battle*, *Studia Islamica* 114, no. 2 (2019), 219–247, suggests the direct influence of sixth-century Roman ideas on the West Arabians. But cf. A. Silverstein, Q 30:2–5 in Near Eastern Context, *Der Islam* 97 (2020), 11–42, who notes a broader Arabian and Middle Eastern context for this material.

31 The Romans famously appear in *Sūrat al-Rūm* (Q 30). See Silverstein, (as footnote 30). The priests of Zoroastrianism appear once at Q 22:17, which is also held to be a late Medinan verse: *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, online, s.v. *Magians* (W. R. Darrow).

32 *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, online, s.v. *Jerusalem* (H. Busse).

at least in outline, if not in its sometimes contradictory details.³³ Arguments from the absence of evidence are problematic, especially when they relate to scripture, the specific concerns of which may explain apparent gaps. But the silences are at least concomitant with the bulk of the content of the Qur'ān reflecting the period before the expansions of the mid-630s and mid-640s. They do not necessarily support a concern with conquering the Roman and the Sasanian empires in the Prophet's lifetime, but do not exclude this possibility, either.³⁴

While the short and long-term strategic objectives of Muḥammad and his West Arabian followers remain somewhat obscure, it is certain that the economic and political pragmatics of tribal federation were one consideration.³⁵ It is also plausible that apocalyptic or millenarian thinking fuelled military expansion, at least on the part of some of the leading members of the new polity. Versions of this argument for millenarianism have been made by Donner and Howard-Johnston, among others.³⁶ Stephen Shoemaker has rightly emphasised that planning, organisation and even imperialist objectives are compatible – indeed arguably in line with – apocalyptic and millenarian beliefs in late antiquity (and, indeed, in many other periods of history, as well).³⁷ In Donner and Shoemaker's somewhat speculative reconstructions of these beliefs, conquest of Jerusalem, with all its eschatological significance to monotheists, was likely to already have been an objective by the end of Muḥammad's career, at the latest.³⁸ This seems plausible, although difficult to prove categorically given the state of the evidence.

That the conflict between the Romans and the Sasanians of 602–28 informed the West Arabians' ideology and so their military and political objectives is also an attractive idea, and some recent proposals have suggested direct influence of Roman salvific propaganda on Muḥammad and his West Arabian followers. It is certainly possible that the Faithful considered themselves to be in association with other monotheists in the war with the Sasanians – or were perceived by others that way.³⁹ Again, in the present state of the evidence it is difficult to do more than to suggest that Muḥammad and his

33 Crone, "War." (as footnote 29).

34 Cf. F. M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Historical Writing*, Princeton 1981, 25–31.

35 Donner, *Conquests* (as footnote 2), 63–65, 67–68, 85–90, 96–98, 101.

36 Donner, *Believers* (as footnote 3), 16, 81–82, 96–97, 125, 143–144; Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses* (as footnote 7), 445–446.

37 S. J. Shoemaker, "The Reign of God Has Come": Eschatology and Empire in Late Antiquity and Early Islam, *Arabica* 61, 5 (2014), 514–558. For examples from the Latin West in the medieval period, see N. Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, London 1957, 15–17.

38 Donner, *Believers* (as footnote 3), 125, 143–144; Shoemaker, "The Reign of God" (as footnote 37), 530–532 and *passim*.

39 Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses* (as footnote 7), 446–548; Shoemaker, "The Reign of God" (as footnote 37); Tesei, *Heraclius' War Propaganda* (as footnote 30). For the possibility that Muḥammad's movement began in alliance with Roman federates and in opposition to the Sasanians, see M. Lecker, *Were*

followers saw themselves as participating in these world events and interpreted them in religiously-charged terms. They likely perceived themselves as participants in an eschatological moment, where “God’s dominion” (*mulk Allāh* or *amr Allāh*) would be established on earth. If so, as with other similar millenarian movements, this did not preclude expansion at the expense of other monotheists. Certainly, by the end of the caliphate of Abū Bakr, in August 634, the targeting of the resources of the Fertile Crescent is evidence for strategic objectives that entailed expansion well beyond the Peninsula.⁴⁰ Both retaining political control and access to revenue were material factors at stake but, as noted above, there were also ideological aspects to the conquests, including, perhaps, a particular focus on Jerusalem; certainly, the leaders of the new polity envisaged themselves, and represented themselves, as taking a role in a divine plan for the world.

The ability of Muḥammad, his peers and immediate successors to organise in this way, with political reach across the Peninsula and beyond, suggests not only the force of the Prophet’s personality and the loyalty of his closest allies to him and his ideas, but also a pre-existing institutional and organisational capacity in Mecca and Medina. This is not to propose that the Meccans were a very significant economic or military power beyond Western Arabia before the 600s. On the contrary, both the silence of contemporary sources about them and the evidence of their marriage patterns as recorded in the later sources suggest that their reach and influence were relatively small and local. When this evidence is combined with the rather confused traditions about their economic activities, it suggests a more minimalist model of their relative economic reach and importance should be adopted.⁴¹ However, the Meccans’ economic and military activities do seem to have contributed to an organisational capacity, which allowed them to take advantage of the “world crisis” of the 600s.⁴²

Nathaniel Miller proposes that the Qur’ānic term *isrā’* refers to military expeditions north and south, which would reflect a military capacity among the West Arabians in this period, also seen in their poetry; so too would the legendary recollections of their conflicts with Ḥimyar in the later Arabic tradition.⁴³ The question of “Meccan trade” has seen more extensive investigation, and while it no longer seems plausible

the Ghassānids and the Byzantines behind Muḥammad’s hijra?, in: D. Genequand/C. Robin (eds), *Les Jafnides: Des Rois Arabes Au Service de Byzance: VI^e Siècle de l’ère Chrétienne: Actes Du Colloque de Paris, 24–25 Novembre 2008*, Paris 2015, 277–293.

⁴⁰ Donner, *Conquests* (as footnote 2), 89–90, 111–131, 172–191; Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses* (as footnote 7), 464–467.

⁴¹ M. Robinson, The Population Size of Muḥammad’s Mecca and the Creation of the Quraysh, *Der Islam* 99 (2022), 10–37; M. Robinson, From Traders to Caliphs: Prosopography, Geography and the Marriages of Muḥammad’s Tribe, *Al-Masāq* 28, 1 (2016), 22–35; M. Robinson, *Marriage in the Tribe of Muḥammad: A Statistical Study of Early Arabic Genealogical Literature*, Berlin 2019, 148–178.

⁴² For ‘world-crisis’, see Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses* (as footnote 7).

⁴³ N. Miller, Yemeni Inscriptions, Iraqi Chronicles, Hijazi Poetry: A Reconstruction of the Meaning of *Isrā’* in Qur’an 17:1, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 31 (2021), 125–158.

that the Meccans were at the centre of far-reaching, wealthy trading network, they were engaged in commerce which at least had significance in West Arabia and does appear to have given them some connections to the wider world. Furthermore, there is good evidence from the Qurʾān that – whatever the overall scale of late antique Meccan trade – the West Arabians were sophisticated merchants, used to contractual agreements and commercial transactions.⁴⁴ Geoffrey Khan has highlighted the scribal and administrative capacity of the West Arabians and their importing of distinctive scribal practices into the lands they conquered.⁴⁵ Likewise, Michael MacDonald has pointed out that the populations of Late Antique Arabia were not “illiterate”, but rather, “non-literate”; writing was used only in very limited circumstances, with the social structures of central and northern not requiring the extensive use of writing.⁴⁶ These capacities were augmented by the incorporation of the South Arabian kingdom of Ḥimyar into the polity at the end of the prophetic period: South Arabia had long traditions of literacy and scribal administration, as well as military capacity, for all that its political and military power appears to have been diminished after about 550 CE. South Arabians are said to have a prominent place in the new elite that formed in Medina in the last years of Muḥammad’s life and they also have a prominent place in the senior commands in the early conquests.⁴⁷

2 ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, 634–644

The second of the five periods begins with ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb’s accession. Donner concludes that the conquests beyond the Peninsula under ‘Umar’s leadership cannot be explained without a degree of strategic and operational centralisation, even if we recognise, after Noth and others, a “centralising bias” in the sources’ representation of the 630s and 640s.⁴⁸ At the same time, as Landau-Tasseron notes, there is evidence that ‘Umar struggled to maintain Median influence; he is said to have sometimes re-

⁴⁴ A. Marsham, Some Observations on Commerce and Covenant in the Qurʾān, in: G. R. Smith et al. (eds) *Near Eastern and Arabian Essays: Studies in Honour of John F. Healey* (= *Journal of Semitic Studies* Supplement 41), Oxford 2018, 303–313.

⁴⁵ G. Khan, The Pre-Islamic Background of Muslim Legal Formularies, *Aram* 6 no. 1/2 (1994), 193–224; G. Khan, The Opening Formula and Witness Clauses in Arabic Legal Documents from the Early Islamic Period, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 139, 1 (2019), 23–40.

⁴⁶ M. C. A. Macdonald, Ancient Arabia and the Written Word, *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 40 (2010), 5–27.

⁴⁷ Donner, *Conquests* (as footnote 2), 78; S. Gundelfinger/P. Verkinderen, The Governors of al-Shām and Fārs in the Early Islamic Empire – A Comparative Regional Perspective, in: H.-L. Hagemann/S. Heidemann (eds), *The Early Islamic Empire at Work. Volume 1, Transregional and Regional Elites - Connecting the Early Islamic Empire*, Berlin 2020, 255–329, here 263, 297.

⁴⁸ Donner, Centralized Authority (as footnote 2), 346–359, quotation at 357; Noth/Conrad, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition* (as footnote 17). See also Donner, *Conquests* (as footnote 2), 174.

placed governors because of pressure from the provinces and does not always seem to have controlled campaigns from the centre.⁴⁹ Certainly, the conceptual foundations already established under Muḥammad persisted because they were effective and could be adapted to new circumstances. Similarly, the leaders of the movement proved themselves capable of organised action in the expanded arena. The small face-to-face organisation at Medina allowed for the delegation of significant autonomy to regional commanders, but also for some central intervention in the conquests in Roman and Sasanian territory. However, the new scale of military activities, and the multiple theatres in which warfare was taking place, presented challenges to the authority and influence of Medina.

As Iraq, Syria and Egypt were conquered, the administrative structures of the garrison camps (*amṣār*) and pension and taxation lists (*dawāwīn*) were implemented to distribute resources to the armies, with the concomitant retention of some centralised control over them, at least at the level of the province. That such a system could be implemented across the conquered territories speaks of pre-existing capacity at Medina for organisation and administration and perhaps also to a degree of centralisation in higher-level conceptual and operational matters.⁵⁰ The unity of the Hijāzi elite and their allies was founded on the idea of conquest in God's name and of a new religious-political dispensation led by the Faithful. The idea of emigration (*hijra*) with fellow members of the faithful (*mu'minīn*, or 'emigrants', *muhājirūn*) for the purposes of divinely-sanctioned war against non-believers (*kuffār* or *mushrikūn*) was also widely shared.⁵¹ Principles around the management of 'God's wealth' – in later texts, *māl Allāh*, or the *fay'* – also appear to have roots in the ideas of the earliest members of the movement.⁵² Further, the archaeological evidence for the new settlements across the Middle East is now plentiful enough to support the case that there was a pattern of Arabian army camps established near to, but not in, existing urban centres – this holds true to some extent at least in Syria and Iran as well as in Egypt, Iraq and the Jazīra, where the *amṣār* were longer-lasting.⁵³ Just as the monotheist conceptual

⁴⁹ Landau-Tasseron, *From Tribal Society* (as footnote 5), 196–197.

⁵⁰ Donner observes that the establishment of the *dīwān* suggests “some measure of administrative centralization and regulation closely tied to the military activities of the conquerors” (Donner, *Centralized Authority* [as footnote 2], 355). These points about the *dīwān* and the *amṣār* are underestimated in Landau-Tasseron (as footnote 5), 196. See further on the *dīwān* and their development, M. Legendre, *The translation of the diwān and the making of the Marwanid 'language reform': Secretarial agency, economic incentives, and regional dynamics in the Umayyad state*, in: A. Borrut et al (eds), *Navigating Language in the Early Islamic World, Multilingualism, Arabicization, and Language Change in the First Centuries of Islam*, 2024.

⁵¹ See above, footnote 22.

⁵² *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Third Edition*, online, s.v. *Fay'* (A. Marsham).

⁵³ Donner, *Conquests* (as footnote 2), 245; D. Whitcomb, *Amṣār in Syria? Syrian Cities after the Conquest*, *ARAM* 6 (1994), 13–33; C. F. Robinson, *Empires and Elites after the Muslim Conquest: The Transformation of North Mesopotamia*, Cambridge 2000.

framework has analogies in wider late antique religious culture, this practice of establishing army camps recalls Roman and Sasanian precedents;⁵⁴ both give the impression that the early seventh-century West Arabians were connected to the wider world and well placed to organise large-scale conquests when the opportunity arose.

There were two main phases in these conquests. First, came the continued direction of attacks against the Romans in Syria and Sasanians in Iraq in the mid-to-late 630s, and then, at the turn of the decade, a phase of institutional consolidation, together with further expansion into Egypt, Armenia and Iran. There are also suggestions in the sources of more opportunist raids and warfare, with perhaps little or no association with the more organised campaigns led by Muḥammad's former associates and their allies, but these appear to have been comparatively marginal in terms of both scale and effect.⁵⁵ Even if one is sceptical about the centralising biases of the Arabic tradition, there is some evidence from the non-Arabic material that armies were coordinated at least at a provincial level and operated with strategic direction, perhaps sometimes with input from Medina.⁵⁶

The first wave, in the mid-to-late 630s is described in detail by Donner in *The Early Islamic Conquests*. His broad conclusions about this period remain valid: the armies were composed of segments of tribes, combined in new military groups according to the demands of Medina; a small number of leaders, all from Quraysh and their allies, held the senior commands.⁵⁷ At first the Arabic-speaking, nomadic tribes were brought into alliance with Medina, and then the Roman and Sasanian armies were confronted directly, and the first garrison camps established.⁵⁸ The second wave of campaigning, from the end of the 630s and into the 640s, was directed operationally from the new garrisons in Syria and Iraq, but also saw some intervention from Medina, as 'Umar and his associates sought to maintain some control over the conquests.

54 On the late Roman army camp, see P. Southern/K. R. Dixon, *The Late Roman Army*, London 1996, 132–133; on the Sasanian and late Roman camps, see E. W. Sauer et al., Innovation at Persia's Frontiers: Sasanian Campaign Bases and Defensive Barriers, in: L. Vagalinski/N. Sharankov (eds), *Limes XII. Proceedings of the 22nd International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies, Ruse, Bulgaria, September 2012*, Sofia 2015, 327–331.

55 This point about opportunistic warfare and its comparatively minor significance is made by Hoyland, *In God's Path* (as footnote 7), 56–57.

56 See the discussion of Egypt, below, 38. At least by the 660s–680s, commentators in Mesopotamia and Armenia also saw the early conquests as having been somewhat coordinated and state-like. See, e.g. S. P. Brock, North Mesopotamia in the Late Seventh Century: Book XV of John Bar Penkaye's *Riṣ Melle*, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 9 (1987), 51–75, here 57–58, 60–61; and Howard-Johnston (as footnote 7), 76–79. See also Howard-Johnston in this volume.

57 Donner, *Conquests* (as footnote 2), 221–231. On the senior commanders, see Donner, *Conquests* (as footnote 2), 111–116, 119, 173–177; *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, online, s.v. *Sa'd b. Abi Waqqās* (G. Hawting).

58 This process is explained in detail in Donner, *Conquests* (as footnote 2).

The cases of Egypt and Fars have been examined in some detail in the secondary literature and they form the basis of the discussion here. Certainty about how these conquests came about is not possible, but there is a notable pattern of reports about reinforcements being sent from Medina to follow up these new conquests under the command of individuals without any loyalty to the incumbent provincial commander; importantly, this pattern is corroborated in the case of Egypt by independent non-Muslim material.⁵⁹ The pattern could indicate an attempt to curb the independence of action of provincial commanders on the part of Medina, by actively supporting conquests under rival commanders, or it could simply reflect competition between more autonomous commanders on the new frontiers beyond Arabia.

The conquest of Egypt is the more thoroughly studied. Donner contests Albrecht Noth's assertion that the stories of 'Umar granting his consent for the conquest of Egypt are secondary developments, intended to cover up that 'Amr b. al-Āṣ, the commander in charge, in fact acted with autonomy.⁶⁰ Howard-Johnston follows Donner in concluding that there was a degree of centralised strategic planning behind the invasion of Egypt, but this was coordinated by 'Amr without 'Umar's authorisation.⁶¹ In contrast, Petra Sijpesteijn uses circumstantial evidence in support of an argument for possible Medinan authority: Sijpesteijn suggests that Egypt's wealth and its strategic significance as a base for further conquests in Africa made it an attractive target for both 'Umar and 'Amr. She notes the report that Roman tribute payments to the Muslims had stopped in 639 and sees the invasion as a response from 'Umar in Medina.⁶² Wilferd Madelung notes that 'Umar decided to send an army under the command of al-Zubayr b. al-'Awwām to support 'Amr in the conquest of Egypt in the following year. This suggests that, as Madelung puts it, 'Umar used reinforcements directed from West Arabia to seek to "curb the independence of 'Amr".⁶³ Booth concurs with recent scholarship on the organisational capacities of the conquerors but leaves aside the question of 'Umar and 'Amr. He notes, "it is nevertheless notable that John of Nikiou (or his source) at least *perceived* a co-ordinated assault, with two separate forces under a single commander, converging at a pre-planned point" and that these "tactics . . . are reminiscent of those described elsewhere in the Middle East."⁶⁴

⁵⁹ See below, note 64.

⁶⁰ Donner, *Conquests* (as footnote 2), 347–350.

⁶¹ Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses* (as footnote 7), 469–470, 528.

⁶² P. Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State: The World of a Mid-Eighth Century Egyptian Official*, Oxford 2013, 49–52.

⁶³ W. Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate*, Cambridge 1997, 61–62.

⁶⁴ P. Booth, The Muslim Conquest of Egypt Reconsidered, *Travaux et Mémoires* 17 (2013), 639–670, here 666, citing Donner, *Conquests* (as footnote 2), 91–219 for "elsewhere". On this latter point, the example of Fars, below is pertinent, too.

As with Egypt, the initial raids on Sasanian Fars in 635 are said to have been unauthorised by 'Umar, and to have provoked his anger.⁶⁵ However, a second invasion is then said to have taken place in 639 or 640, this time on the orders of 'Umar, and led by the Umayyad 'Uthmān b. Abī al-'Āṣ (an uncle of 'Uthmān b. 'Affān, the future caliph).⁶⁶ Again, circumstantial evidence might support the idea that the second invasion was indeed centrally directed. As Martin Hinds puts it: "Strategically, it made good sense."⁶⁷ With the last Sasanian king, Yazgerd III (r. 632–51), defeated at Jalūlā' in 637 or 638, southern Iraq came under Arabian control, and with it the routes east into al-Ahwaz; capturing Fars using forces in Baḥrayn would allow for the encirclement of the Sasanian garrison there. As with the invasion of Egypt at around the same time, two forces were used in combination and thereafter attacks on Fars came from two sides: from Baḥrayn, and then from the Iraqi garrison of Basra, which may have been sent to reinforce the Umayyad governor of Baḥrayn partly in order to prevent his having autonomy in the region.⁶⁸ Likewise, in Syria, when new commanders were appointed in 639 in the wake of the plague, Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān was given command of southern and central Syria, perhaps in order to head off the ambitions of the Ḥimyarī commander Dhū al-Kalā' Samayfa' b. Nākūr.⁶⁹ The first such attack on a region from multiple directions was remembered in some of the later tradition as having been the attacks on the Romans in the region of the Jazīra in 637, which involved troops under four commanders from the two provinces of Syria and Iraq.⁷⁰

Taken together, these reports about Egypt, Fars, Syria and the Jazīra in the immediate aftermath of the first wave of military successes against Roman Syria and Iraq, appear to be more than a repeated *topos* in the later sources. In the case of Egypt, there is some corroboration of events from sources outside the Arabic tradition. Similar instances can also be found in later periods – for example, the conquest of al-Andalus after 711 appears to have begun with an unauthorised attack, followed up by a new force under a different commander. The overall impression is of much autonomy on the part of commanders, but also of a capacity on the part of Medina to assert influence in the new theatres of war.

65 M. Hinds, *The First Arab Conquests in Fārs*, *Iran* 22 (1984), 39–53, here 40, 41. I am grateful to Harry Munt for pointing out this article to me.

66 Hinds, *The First Arab Conquests in Fārs* (as footnote 65), 40–43.

67 Hinds, *The First Arab Conquests in Fārs* (as footnote 65), 42.

68 Hinds, *The First Arab Conquests in Fārs* (as footnote 65), 43.

69 Madelung, *The Succession* (as footnote 63), 61.

70 N. F. Posner, *The Muslim Conquest of Northern Mesopotamia: An Introductory Essay into its Historical Background and Historiography*, New York University Dissertation 1985, 268. I would like to thank Harry Munt for reminding me of this example.

3 ‘Uthmān, 644–656

‘Uthmān’s caliphate (r. 644–656) marks a second, very distinct, break. ‘Uthmān and his ‘Abd Shams relatives had taken control of all the major commands by the early 650s. These appointments aligned conquest strategies and the shared political interests of ‘Uthmān’s relatives and allies from ‘Abd Shams. Within a few years of his accession, ‘Uthmān appointed a second cousin Mu‘āwiya b. Abī Sufyān to overall authority for all of Greater Syria, including the northern frontier with the Romans, which had formerly been held by one of the Anṣār.⁷¹ At around the same time, ‘Uthmān replaced the conqueror of Roman Egypt, ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ, with his own foster brother, ‘Abd Allāh b. Sa’d.⁷² In Iraq, Kufa went to the Umayyad al-Walīd b. ‘Uqba in c. 646–647 and then in 649–651 to Sa’īd b. al-‘Āṣ, an Umayyad son-in-law of ‘Uthmān.⁷³ A maternal cousin of ‘Uthmān, ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Āmir b. Kurayz, was appointed to Sīstān in 644 and then to Basra in 649–50; Baḥrayn (and with it a garrison at Tawwaj in Fars), which had been an independent command were annexed to Basra at this point.⁷⁴ Marwān b. al-Ḥakam, a paternal first cousin, is said to have served as a scribe and adviser in commands in North Africa and Fars in southern Iran.⁷⁵

At the same time, ‘Uthmān strove to combine organisational power through his kinship network with ideological power. Both the Meccan sanctuary and the Medinan mosque were said to have been rebuilt by him in the later 640s, and ‘Uthmān also presided over the composition of the Qur’ān as a codex at around the same time.⁷⁶ These efforts were no doubt prompted in part by the new scale of the political arena. By the late 640s and early 650s, the geographical range of the campaigns of conquest and the distribution of the new garrisons, would necessarily have entailed significant delegation of “strategic-operational” decisions, even given the capacity of postal riders to cover huge distances surprisingly quickly.⁷⁷ The scale of the conquests and settle-

⁷¹ The date is not certain, see M. b. J. al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, *Annales quos scripsit Abu Džafar Mohammed Ibn Džarīr At-Ṭabarī*, Leiden 1879–1901, vol. 1, 2865–2867.

⁷² Ibn Khayyāt, *Ta’rīkh*, ed. M. N. and Ḥ. K. Fawwāz, Beirut 1995, 92, 106; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh* (as footnote 71), vol. 1, 2593; *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, online, s.v. ‘Abd Allāh b. Sa’d (C. H. Becker).

⁷³ For the appointment of al-Walīd to Kufa, see Ibn Khayyāt, *Ta’rīkh* (as footnote 72), 90, 106; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh* (as footnote 71), vol. 1, 2811. On Sa’īd as governor of Kufa by 650–651, see al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh* (as footnote 71), vol. 1, 2836, 2840. On Sa’īd’s marriage to two of ‘Uthmān’s daughters, see *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, online, s.v. Sa’īd b. al-‘Āṣ (C. E. Bosworth), where his appointment to Kufa is given as 649–650.

⁷⁴ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh* (as footnote 71), vol. 1, 2802, 2828; Ibn Khayyāt, *Ta’rīkh* (as footnote 72), 107; Hinds, *The First Arab Conquests* (as footnote 65), 39.

⁷⁵ *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, online, s.v. Marwān b. al-Ḥakam (C. E. Bosworth).

⁷⁶ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh* (as footnote 71), vol. 1, 2810–2811; Ibn Khayyāt, *Ta’rīkh* (as footnote 72), 91; H. Motzki, *The Collection of the Qur’ān. A Reconsideration of Western Views in Light of Recent Methodological Developments*, *Der Islam* 78, 1 (2001), 1–34; F. Déroche, *Qur’ans of the Umayyads: A First Overview*, Leiden 2013, 35.

⁷⁷ See A. Silverstein, *Postal Systems in the pre-modern Islamic world*, Cambridge 2007.

ments had also led to a new situation, where the “emigrants” and “faithful” in the garrisons claimed their own ideological positions and political agency, with disastrous consequences for ‘Uthmān.⁷⁸

Because of this new imperial scale, many strategic and operational decisions occurred at the level of the provincial garrison, with different commanders in some cases competing in the same theatre. Examples include parallel expeditions into Khurāsān in 650–651, led by commanders from the two garrisons in Iraq, and parallel expeditions into Armenia, led by the Syrians and the Kufans.⁷⁹ Furthermore, if the “centralising bias” of the sources is accepted, then many more decisions that are represented as having involved communication with ‘Uthmān at Medina, may in fact have been taken by garrison commanders, or in some cases their sub-commanders. It is also tempting to connect the targeting of Sīstān, Khurāsān and Roman Africa with the autonomy of the garrison commanders in Fustāt, Kufa and Basra more than with direction from Medina – each of these new targets were the wealthiest regions beyond Egypt and Iraq, and their resources would have been attractive to the three garrison commanders as they sought to secure and augment their political power.⁸⁰

That said, the strategic objectives of the defeat of the Roman and Sasanian empires, and the acquisition of their wealthiest provinces were also clear foci of military action during ‘Uthmān’s caliphate. In the East, once the Sasanian king was pursued to his death in Khurāsān in 651, and the provinces of Fars had been subdued,⁸¹ Khurāsān and Sīstān were not just potential sources of tribute and tax, but also strategically important: they were the eastern frontiers with the Hephthalite Huns and the regions vulnerable to an attempted Sasanian restoration.⁸² The details of the evidence are sometimes confused but for campaigns in Khurāsān, ‘Umayr b. ‘Uthmān b. Sa’d seems to have been the main commander before Qays b. al-Haytham al-Sulamī was appointed there by ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Āmir in about 653.⁸³ The command in Sīstān is said to have changed hands three times before the Umayyad ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Samura took

⁷⁸ Crone, *Evolution* (as footnote 5), 30; See recently the observations in J. Brockopp, *Muḥammad’s Heirs: The Rise of Muslim Scholarly Communities, 622–950*, Cambridge 2017, on the emergence of local religious authority in the new polity.

⁷⁹ Khurasān: al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh* (as footnote 71), vol. 1, 2836. Cf. Ibn Khayyāt, *Ta’rīkh* (as footnote 72), 96. Armenia: al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-Buldān*, eds A. al-Ṭabbā’/U. al-Ṭabbā’, Beirut 1957, 277–279; Ibn A’tḥam al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, ed. M. A. Khan, Hyderabad 1968–1975, vol. 2, 108–111.

⁸⁰ On the wealth and economic significance of Roman Africa in the early seventh century, see C. Morrison/V. Prigent, review of W. E. Kaegi, *Muslim Expansion and Byzantine Collapse in North Africa*, *The Medieval Review* (September 1, 2013), 18–19.

⁸¹ Fars: Ibn Khayyāt, *Ta’rīkh* (as footnote 72), 93–95; Hinds, *The First Arab Conquests* (as footnote 65), 46–47.

⁸² P. Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran*, Cambridge 2012, 4; R. Haug, *The Eastern Frontier: Limits of Empire in Late Antiquity and Early Medieval Central Asia*, London 2019, 86–88.

⁸³ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh* (as footnote 71), vol. 1, 2828–2829. For the date, see Ibn Khayyāt, *Ta’rīkh* (as footnote 72), 107.

control of Zaranj on the Helmand Delta in 653 on behalf of 'Uthmān's appointment at Basra and maternal cousin, 'Abd Allāh b. 'Āmir (who had himself commanded Sīstān for about a year in the late 640s).⁸⁴ These appointments conform to the pattern of the consolidation of power in the hands of 'Uthmān's relatives, and their military targets suggest a concern not just with the wealth of the former Sasanian East but also with the strategic risks of Sasanian reconquest, perhaps in alliance with the Hephthalites and other powers east of Iran.

The evidence for coordinated action is stronger for the Mediterranean. The appointments of 'Uthmān's foster-brother 'Abd Allāh b. Sa'd and second cousin Mu'āwiya in Egypt and Syria respectively were the foundation for a combined effort in a war against the Romans. 'Uthmān's marriage alliance with the Banū Kalb in Greater Syria, also indicates political interests that were shared by 'Uthmān, Mu'āwiya and the leading tribal group on the Roman-Syrian frontier.⁸⁵ This war would have been in the interests of the two commanders, and of 'Uthmān himself. 'Abd Allāh and Mu'āwiya pursued a policy of encirclement of Constantinople.⁸⁶ At the beginning of 'Uthmān's rule came the suppression of a Roman-backed revolt in Egypt,⁸⁷ followed by major naval raids against the Romans,⁸⁸ including attacks on Cyprus,⁸⁹ alongside raids into Roman Africa, and Syrian raids into Armenia, Azerbaijan and Caucasian Albania.⁹⁰ After Ibn Sa'd's appointment to Egypt in 645–646 sustained efforts were made against the Roman commanders in Africa.⁹¹ If the sources' invocations of caliphal commands and exchanges of letters across all of these theatres are treated with some scepticism, the impression is of much strategic decision-making happening at the level of the province, with Egypt and Syria cooperating significantly in the war against the Romans, but retaining autonomy, and having local priorities in some tension with imperial ones.

'Uthmān's concentration of the most powerful positions in the new empire in the hands of his allies from 'Abd Shams would have made establishing and maintaining shared political interests more straightforward: ending Roman power in the eastern Mediterranean and Sasanian power on the Iranian plateau were objectives shared by Medina and by commanders in the West and East respectively. There is very limited

⁸⁴ Ibn Khayyāt, *Ta'rikh* (as footnote 72), 98; *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Third Edition*, online, s.v. 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Samura (A. Marsham)

⁸⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (as footnote 71), vol. 1., 3056; A. Ahmed, *The Religious Elite of the Early Islamic Hijāz: Five Prosopographical Case Studies*, Oxford 2011, 59–60.

⁸⁶ A detailed case is made with references by Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses* (as footnote 7), 477–480.

⁸⁷ Ibn Khayyāt, *Ta'rikh* (as footnote 72), 91.

⁸⁸ Ibn Khayyāt, *Ta'rikh* (as footnote 72), 92, 97; C. Foss, Egypt Under Mu'āwiya Part I: Flavius Papas and Upper Egypt, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 72, 1 (2009), 1–24, here 21.

⁸⁹ Raids on Cyprus: Ibn Khayyāt, *Ta'rikh* (as footnote 72), 92; Foss, Egypt Under Mu'āwiya I (as footnote 88), 21.

⁹⁰ Bardha'a/Partaw was raided from Basra in 644–645: Ibn Khayyāt, *Ta'rikh* (as footnote 72), 90.

⁹¹ Ibn Khayyāt, *Ta'rikh* (as footnote 72), 92, 96.

evidence for close cooperation between the two zones, nor, within Iraq, for cooperation between Kufa and Basra.⁹² But there is good evidence for some coordination in the West between Syria and Egypt, and for the dominance of Basra in the major campaigns in the East. While Howard-Johnston argues that the failure of the war with the Romans in the early-to-mid 650s was a major factor in 'Uthmān's downfall, it seems more plausible, as Khalid Yahya Blankinship notes, that an inevitable counter-reaction to the dynastic and centralising policies of 'Uthmān, are what in fact triggered the civil war of 656–661.⁹³

4 and 5 Mu'āwiya, c. 661–c.670 and c.670–680

If the strategic ambition of the defeat of the Romans had already been a priority under 'Uthmān, it was even more so once Mu'āwiya made Greater Syria the new political centre of the empire; the frontier province facing Roman Anatolia and the Mediterranean was now also the imperial capital. Clive outlines the concerted and coordinated naval campaigns launched from the province of Egypt in the 660s.⁹⁴ Howard-Johnston argues for a high degree of strategic planning and centralised control over operations, with garrisoning of North Africa, and recurrent raids into Asia Minor and the Caucasus. There were also diplomatic efforts to break the Albanians away from loyalty to Rome, perhaps even with espionage to provoke an assassination attempt on the Roman Emperor in July 668 or 669.⁹⁵ Jankowiak proposes that the Arabians' ambitions culminated in a siege of Constantinople in around 668 (as opposed to a date in the mid-670s).⁹⁶ After about 672–674, the initiative was regained by the Romans, with the last significant naval action by the Arabians in 673–674.⁹⁷

At the same time, Mu'āwiya's allies and appointees in the East were obliged to confront the challenge of the Sasanian threat in the East and the restoration of Peroz in Zaranj during the civil war, in the caliphate of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (r. 656–61).⁹⁸ For the eastern reconquest, Mu'āwiya reappointed 'Uthmān's former commanders in Basra and Sīstān, the Umayyads 'Abd Allāh b. 'Āmir (g. 665–666 and Ibn Samura (g. 658–667). Then, with the task of pacifying Sīstān completed, and with the surrender of Ziyād b. Sumayya, 'Alī's former governor of Basra, secured, Mu'āwiya acted to end the

⁹² Pace Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses* (as footnote 7), 471, quoted above.

⁹³ Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses* (as footnote 7), 480–481; K. Y. Blankinship, *The End of the Jihād State: The Reign of Hishām ibn 'Abd al-Malik and the Collapse of the Umayyads*, Albany 1994, 20, 23.

⁹⁴ Foss, *Egypt Under Mu'āwiya I* (as footnote 88), 22.

⁹⁵ Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses* (as footnote 7), 488–492.

⁹⁶ M. Jankowiak, *The First Arab Siege of Constantinople*, *Travaux et mémoires* 17 (2013), 237–320, here 273–274.

⁹⁷ M. Jankowiak, *The First Arab Siege of Constantinople* (as footnote 96), 276–282, 303.

⁹⁸ Crone, *The Nativist Prophets* (as footnote 82), 4.

power of the nascent 'Abd Shamsī establishment. He removed both men from office and appointed Ziyād to Basra (g. 665–673) in Ibn 'Āmir's place, at the same time adopting Ziyād as his own paternal half-brother. Kufa was later also brought under Ziyād's control (g. 669–73), making the eastern province into one larger entity under the command of an *amīr* with long-standing roots in the region, lower tribal status, and close personal ties to the caliph. Likewise, in Egypt, Mu'āwiya initially reappointed 'Amr b. al-ʿĀṣ, but within a few years of 'Amr's death in 664, had appointed 'Amr's former scribe, the Anṣārī Maslama b. Mukhallad (g. 667–682). Maslama cooperated closely with Mu'āwiya, on one occasion sending surplus tax revenue of 600,000 dinars to the Syrian capital.⁹⁹

Mu'āwiya's new governors in the West and East were responsible for the re-establishment of garrisons on their respective frontiers at the turn of the decade. In both cases the new foundations seem to reflect long-term ambitions in each region, with larger numbers of settlers established at Qayrawān in Africa and Marw in Khurāsān. It also appears that the commanders in Egypt and Iraq consolidated their positions in this period, and there is perhaps less sense of a coordinated higher-level strategy in the latter part of the 670s. Ibn Mukhallad's commander in Africa, 'Uqba b. Nāfi' (g. 670–3; d. 683) founded Qayrawān at a new site near to the previous garrison in 670. Ziyād's new appointee to Khurāsān, al-Rabī' b. Ziyād al-Ḥārithī (g. 671–672 or 673) founded a larger, more permanent garrison at Marw in 671. That 'Uqba was deposed from his governorship in Africa in 673 and replaced by a freedman of Ibn Mukhallad perhaps suggests a determination on Ibn Mukhallad's part to retain control of Africa.¹⁰⁰ Ziyād died in 673, a few months after al-Rabī'. By 675, Ziyād's son 'Ubayd Allāh (g. 675–83; d. 686) had succeeded him to the whole eastern command; reports about Khurāsān after al-Rabī' are confused, but the province seems to have changed hands repeatedly before Sa'īd b. 'Uthmān b. 'Affān (g. 676–c.680) was appointed and a new series of campaigns began in Transoxiana.¹⁰¹

Conclusions

Centralised organisation and some shared ideology existed from the late 620s, and these evolved with the conquests. What gave the central organisation its resilience in this era of rapid expansion were the coherent and adaptable ideological foundations

⁹⁹ C. Foss, Egypt Under Mu'āwiya Part II: Middle Egypt, Fustāt and Alexandria, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 72, 2 (2009), 259–278, here 269.

¹⁰⁰ *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, online, s.v. 'Uqba b. Nāfi' (V. Christides).

¹⁰¹ Ibn Khayyāt, *Ta'rikh* (as footnote 72), 138; Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (as footnote 71), vol. 2, 177–180; Crone, *The Evolution* (as footnote 5), 32, n.230.

upon which it was built, and the relatively small, cohesive network of Meccans and their allies who led it. Their organisational capacity is notable – they quickly founded what amounted to a system of imperial government underpinned by their religious concepts. The capacity to do so derived from West Arabia's commercial and political situation in the sixth and early seventh centuries: the Meccans were literate, had military experience, and were connected commercially and culturally to the wider world. However, the political and military successes that this organisational capacity brought about also led to rapid changes in circumstance, growing organisational complexity, and discontinuities and diversity in ideology and the strategic objectives of various actors.

Major organisational changes coincide with the incorporation of large sections of the Roman and Sasanian Empires in the late 630s and early 640s, and with what amounts to an internal coup by elements of 'Abd Shams under 'Uthmān's leadership later 640s and early 650s. The 630s and 640s saw a degree of uniformity and coherence in the policies and practices in the settlement and garrisoning of Iraq, Syria and Egypt, and similar patterns of coordination of expansionist warfare in Egypt, Fars and Syria. Medina may have intervened in these new theatres and similar strategies, such as pincer movements by separate armies and the use of rival commanders to maintain a competitive balance of power on the frontiers, may be in evidence. Nonetheless, commanders in these new provinces had great autonomy of action and access to new resources and personnel drawn from the defeated empires. Then, from the end of the 640s, 'Uthmān and his Abd Shamsī allies took control of the whole empire, bringing a stronger sense of shared purpose, perhaps most especially in the war with the Roman Empire, where close cooperation between Egypt and Syria and the use of intelligence and encirclement are in evidence. At the same time, it became difficult to retain the cooperation and loyalty of all the emigrants; competition between garrisons and commanders is well-attested and the civil war of 656–661 is testament to the failure to organise the conquest society behind objectives of 'Uthmān and his allies.

With the move of the capital to the Roman frontier after 661, the war against the Roman Empire was prosecuted with even greater determination. A policy of appointing local "new men" to the key commands, and the further concentration of power in the hands of these allies saw Iraq and the East become the purview of Ziyād, while close cooperation with Maslama b. Mukhallad saw conquests in North Africa and coordinated efforts in the Mediterranean against the Romans. At this point, both the destruction of the Roman Empire and the full consolidation of control over what had been Sasanian Iran became plausible short or medium-term objectives. However, a decade of determined effort against the Romans had stalled by the early 670s, and the latter years of Mu'āwiya's rule appear to have witnessed a more defensive stance towards Rome and some relaxation in the grip of the cen-

tre. Greater independence on the part of the governors in Egypt and Iraq is perhaps reflected in their appointments in the middle of that decade and their efforts at conquering and settling the wealthy regions of Africa and Khurāsān. Conquests in these regions would develop a logic of their own, and somewhat disperse efforts against the Romans before seeding the rebellions that ended Umayyad rule.¹⁰²

102 On the local logic of the North African westward expansion, see E. Manzano Moreno, The Iberian Peninsula and North Africa, in: C. F. Robinson (ed.) *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 1, Cambridge 2010, 581–622, and N. Clarke, *The Muslim conquest of Iberia medieval Arabic narratives*, London 2012. On Khurāsān and Transoxiana, see Haug, *The Eastern Frontier* (as footnote 82), 89–92. On the Marwanid Umayyad era and its end, see A. Marsham, *The Umayyad Empire*, Edinburgh, 2024.

There and Back Again: Heraclius and Constantinople before the Arab conquest

In his famous novel *The Hobbit, or There and Back Again*, J. R. R. Tolkien tells the story of the respectable, middle aged hobbit Bilbo Baggins, who unexpectedly left his comfortable home and set out on an adventurous journey.¹ After his dangerous quest to the Lonely Mountain and many hardships suffered on the way, Bilbo returned with a remarkable gold treasure to the Shire. When he arrived at home, however, he found that his relatives because of his long absence thought him to be dead and claimed his home and his possessions. With difficulty, he prevented the total loss of his belongings and reoccupied his place. But even then, life in the Shire was not the same as it had been before.²

The story of the brave hobbit bears some similarities to the history of the 7th century emperor Heraclius which seem suitable to set the scene for my argument. Therefore, the readership may kindly forgive my penchant for apparently far-fetched metaphors. Just like Bilbo, however, the East Roman emperor had left his proper place in Constantinople and had unexpectedly undertaken a risky expedition that brought him to distant landscapes. He had fought against enemies who were depicted in contemporary sermons as dragons as treacherous as Tolkien's gold loving Smaug.³ Finally, the emperor having regained the power over his empire returned with rich booty to Constantinople. So, in what condition did Heraclius find his place on his return? What has changed during his long absence? And what was the actual reason that he had left?

While the last question had been raised in scholarly debate several times and varying answers, for obvious reasons mainly focusing on the military affairs of the Eastern Roman Empire, were given,⁴ the effects and consequences of his leaving on

1 This article is indebted to the patience and support of Federico Montinaro. His comments and those of the anonymous reviewer have helped me to sharpen my arguments. The remaining shortcomings are my own.

2 J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit: Or There and Back Again*, London ³1984.

3 The comparison with a dragon is explicitly used by Theodoros Syncellus when describing the Avar khagan who attempted to besiege Constantinople in 626: "Ἀλλ' οὐδὲ τοῦτο, καίπερ δυνάμενον αἰσχῦναι καὶ δαίμονας, τὴν τοῦ δράκοντος ἐκείνου κακίαν μετρωτέραν εἰργάσατο" (Theodoros Syncellus, *History on the Siege of Constantinople*, ed. L. Sternbach, *Analecta Avarica*, Cracow 1900, p. 78).

4 Walter Kaegi argued that a lack of experienced military commanders forced Heraclius to lead the campaign against the Sasanians in person: W.E. Kaegi, *Heraclius Emperor of Byzantium*, Cambridge 2003. James Howard-Johnston argues along similar lines when he points to the urgency of the situation in 622 to take personal command: J. Howard-Johnston, *The Last Great War of Antiquity*, Oxford/New York 2021. Nadine Viermann takes the view instead that Heraclius had to seize control of the military in order to prevent the risk of being toppled by Roman military stakeholders: N. Viermann,

Constantinople as the Empire's political, social and religious center have received less attention. Yet, they are crucial to better understand the impact Heraclius' move had on the Roman Empire and monarchy. I will argue that as a result of the tense situation of the empire in the early seventh century, caused by external wars and domestic problems, the growing pressure by senatorial elites and the capital's population severely limited Heraclius' scope for action in Constantinople: His presence with the distant troops offered him the possibility to present himself as a charismatic military leader and enabled him to keep his ability to act, at least in this one domain. During his absence, however, the capital developed strategies to cope with the new and unknown situation. Above all, the events during the siege by the Avars in 626 prove to be a turning point in the relationship between emperor and empire.

This argument has some wider implications as it forms the basis to better understand the eastern Roman survival during the Arab conquest. John Haldon pointed out "five sets of factors that, when taken together, might explain the empire's continued existence: the role of beliefs and identity, the nature of the empire's elites, strategic geography, climate and environment, and organizational factors."⁵ The article emphasises that the formation of a shared Christian identity in the core territories and the stronger incorporation of the elites' interests into the political concerns of the imperial court were not a specific reaction to the threat of Arab expansion, but can already be observed during the Persian war. Coping strategies developed to survive the existential threat of the early seventh century contributed substantially to the empire's resilience in the face of Arab conquest.

Before Heraclius' departure

At the beginning of the seventh century, the empire had seen troublesome times and even more trouble was to come about. Avars and Slavs invaded its northern territories, plundered and devastated the Balkan region and demanded ever-increasing tribute payments.⁶ In 626, they even dared to lay siege on the capital itself. In addition, the developments in the east threatened the empire. While Emperor Maurice had

Herakleios, der schwitzende Kaiser: Die Oströmische Monarchie in der ausgehenden Spätantike, Berlin/Boston 2021.

5 J. Haldon, *The Empire That Would Not Die. The Paradox of Eastern Roman Survival, 640–740*, London 2016, 288.

6 F. Curta, The Beginning of the Middle Ages in the Balkans, *Millennium* 10 (2013), 145–214; J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, The Lower Danube Region under Pressure. From Valens to Heraclius, in: A.G. Poulter (ed.), *The Transition to late Antiquity, on the Danube and beyond* (PBA 141), Oxford 2007, 101–134; Pohl, Walter, *Die Awaren: ein Steppenvolk in Mitteleuropa 567–822 n. Chr.*, Munich 1988, 237. R.-J. Lilie, Herakleios und die Ansiedlung der Serben. Überlegungen zum Kapitel 32 des „De administrando imperio“, *Südost-Forschungen* 44 (1985), 17–43, here 19–20.

achieved peace with the Persian Empire, his overthrow and murder in 602 gave the Sasanian king Chosroes II a pretext at hand to renew hostilities against the Romans. The war had devastating consequences for the Roman Empire in geographic, demographic and financial respects. Large parts of the territory in Syria, Palestine and Egypt fell to the Persians, important cities such as Jerusalem and Alexandria were conquered and the wood of the Holy Cross was stolen. Being one of the most important relics of Christianity its loss meant a serious blow to the moral of the Roman population. In his entry on the year 614, the anonymous writer of the contemporary *Chronicon Paschale*, a Christian world chronicle with entries until the year 628, remembered the sack of Jerusalem as a “calamity which deserves unceasing lamentations”.⁷

Besides its psychological effects, the Persian invasion had grave economic consequences. The loss of Egypt disrupted the grain supply, which promptly led to supply shortages and famine in the capital.⁸ Further, the empire lost the tax revenue from the wealthy provinces in the East, which cut a deep hole into the already depleted state treasury. The copper coinage was constantly reduced and had lost over half of its weight by the year 624. For the year 615, the *Chronicon Paschale* reports the introduction of a new silver coin, the so-called hexagram, and *Theophanes the Confessor* adds in his chronicle, written in the early 9th century and largely depending on earlier sources, that, being short of funds, the emperor had taken the church vessels of the Great Church for minting these coins.⁹ But it was not only the treasury that suffered from the war. Above all, it was the population in the provinces. In the *Life of St. George of Choziba*, that was written shortly after his death in the mid-620s, his pupil Antony describes the horrors that the monastery in Choziba near Jericho had experienced. When the Persians had captured the territory up to Damascus and were about to occupy Jerusalem and its hinterland, some of the monks fled to Arabia, while others hid themselves in caves, but were found and killed or taken away as prisoners. They are just one example of a forced migration in the eastern provinces, which seems to have mainly affected Chalcedonian clerics.¹⁰

7 *Chronicon Paschale*, s. a. 614, ed. L. Dindorf, Bonn 1832, p. 704: Τοῦτο τῷ ἔτει περὶ μῆνα ἰούνιον θρήνων ἀπαύστων ἄξιον ἡμῖν συνέβη πάθος; trans. M. Whitby/Ma. Whitby, Liverpool 1989.

8 *Chronicon Paschale* (as footnote 7), s. a. 618, p. 711; Nikephoros, *Breviarium* § 8, ed. and trans. C. Mango, *Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople. Short History* (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 13), Washington, D.C., 1990.

9 *Chronicon Paschale* (as footnote 7), s. a. 615, p. 706; Theophanes, *Chronographia* a. m. 6113, ed. C. de Boor, Leipzig 1883, pp. 302–303; M. Phillips, The Mints of Nicomedia and Cyzicus during the Persian War 610–620, in: T. Goodwin (ed.), *Coinage and History in the Seventh Century Near East* 5, 11–32, here 21; M. Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine monetary economy: c. 300–1450*, Cambridge 1985, 498–499.

10 *Life of Saint George of Choziba* § 29–31, trans. T. Vivian/A. N. Athanassakis, San Francisco 1994; examples of forced migrations to Egypt: Anonymous, *Life of John the Almsgiver*, 6 and 11, ed. H. Delehaye, Une vie inédite de saint Jean l'Aumônier, *Analecta Bollandiana* 45 (1927), 5–74, here 21–24; A. Cameron, The Eastern Provinces in the Seventh Century AD: Hellenism and the Emergence

Moreover, the Persian invasion must have hit senatorial elites severely. In Apamea and Antioch, where the wealthy landowners of Syria resided, archaeological excavations revealed the replacement of luxurious villas by much smaller apartments and shops or workshops.¹¹ Though this finding fits into a more general development of change in late antique urbanism, we know of mass deportations, massacres of Roman population, and the extinction of elite families. From Syriac chronicles we learn about a certain Iwannis Rasafia from Edessa who possessed large estates and an impressive villa in the city. He belonged to a circle of leading Roman families in Syria with a good connection to the court in Constantinople. When Edessa fell to the Persians, he and his family were among the first to be deported. Though his own fate is unknown, his wife died miserably in prison and when his son returned from captivity, he found his family's villa empty. His possessions such as villages, gardens, and a few shops remained, as it is recorded, but all valuables, gold and silver were lost.¹² The son of Iwannis, however, was able to reestablish himself in Edessa, while other families were less lucky. The Apions, probably Egypt's most famous and illustrious senatorial family, lost their large estates shortly after the conquest.¹³ Although the impact cannot be quantified, these examples may illustrate how the Persian invasion not only threatened the territorial integrity of the empire but also endangered the very existence of Roman elites. As such, it affected not just the provinces but also the capital in Constantinople: For one, Constantinople was the hub of an empire wide network of Roman elites. Although they owned land and property in the provinces, they were closely linked to the political center or spent longer periods of time in the capi-

of Islam, in: S. Saïd (ed.), *Ἑλληνισμός: quelques jalons pour une histoire de l'identité grecque: actes du colloque de Strasbourg, 25–27 octobre 1989*, Leiden 1991, 287–313, here 292.

11 W. Brandes/J. Haldon, Towns, Tax and Transformation: State, Cities and Their Hinterlands in the East Roman World, c. 500–800, in: G.P. Brogiolo *et alii* (eds), *Towns and their territories between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (The transformation of the Roman world 9), Leiden 2000, 141–172, here 143–148; Cameron, *The Eastern Provinces* (as footnote 10), 292–293; C. Foss, Syria in transition, A.D. 550–750: an archaeological approach, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 51 (1997), 188–269, here 224; H. Kennedy, Syrian Elites from Byzantium to Islam: Survival or Extinction?, in: J. Haldon (ed.), *Money, Power and Politics in Early Islamic Syria. A review of current debates*, Farnham 2010, 181–198, here 191–192; J.-P. Sodini, Archaeology and Late Antique Social Structures, in: L. Lavan/W. Bowden (eds), *Theory and practice in late antique archaeology*, Leiden 2003, 25–56, here 50.

12 Theophanes, *Chronographia* (as footnote 9), a. m. 6098, p. 293; 6099, p. 295; Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle* 10, 25, trans. M. Moosa, *The Syriac Chronicle of Michael Rabo*, Teaneck, N. J., 2014, p. 432; Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle* 11, 1 (p. 445); *Chronicon ad annum 1234*, 87, trans. I.-B. Chabot, *Chronicon anonymum ad a. D. 819 – Chronicon anonymum ad annum Christi 1234 pertinens*, Vol. I, CSCO 109, Scriptores Syri 56, Louvain 1937, p. 176; Kennedy, Syrian Elites (as footnote 11), 184.

13 J. Keenan, Egypt, in: A. Cameron *et alii* (eds), *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Bd. 14: *Late Antiquity: Empire and Successors, AD 425–600*, Cambridge 2001, 612–637, here 625–628; B. Palme, The Imperial Presence: Government and Army, in: R.S. Bagnall (ed.), *Egypt in the Byzantine World, 300–700*, Cambridge 2007, 244–270, here 265.

tal.¹⁴ Secondly, the troops under the Persian general Shahin had advanced as far as Chalcedon in 615. They were thus within sight of the capital and threatened the estates of Constantinopolitans on the Asian shore of the Bosphorus. Anticipating that their property would be devastated by the Persians, the elites in the capital seem to have pressured the emperor. At least we can see Heraclius eagerly trying to relieve this pressure from his shoulders. When in 615, Shahin had arrived at Chalcedon, Heraclius came personally to hold peace talks.¹⁵

Besides diplomatic efforts, Heraclius strove for military victories. In 612, Priscus, one of the most experienced generals of the Empire, had managed to encircle a Persian army in Caesarea in Cappadocia, an important military hub and the gateway to the empire's heartland. Rumors of the near victory reached Constantinople. Taking the opportunity to pride himself with the soon to be triumph, Heraclius hastily left the capital and headed to Caesarea, leaving behind his highly pregnant wife and the esteemed holy man Theodore of Sykeon who had just arrived to offer his blessings to the newly crowned emperor. By summer, however, the Persians had managed to break through the encirclement and escaped. To absolve the emperor of any responsibility for the sudden and unexpected defeat, general Priscus was later accused of having offended Heraclius and was thus made a scapegoat for the military failure in Caesarea.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the way to Asia Minor now lay open for the Persians. In the following season, Heraclius accompanied his cousin Nicetas, but this second campaign also ended in military defeat.¹⁷ While Heraclius proved to be an unsuccessful diplomat and military leader, the elites' possessions still remained threatened and with them their acceptance of the emperor.

Consequently, the senate intervened in order to uphold imperial policy.¹⁸ The delegation that was sent to the Persian king in 615 carried written dispatches not from

14 The daughter of Heraclius' cousin and leading general Nicetas, Gregoria, was living on her father's estates in North Africa, when she was promised to Heraclius Constantinus; Nikephoros, *Breviarium* (as footnote 8), § 17. Heraclius' mother and fiancée were in Constantinople during the revolt in 610; John of Nikiu, 106, ed. and trans. R. H. Charles, *The Chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiu*, London 1916. The last of the Apions, who was patricius and honorary consul, resided with his wife and children in Constantinople; Greg. Ep. II 27.

15 Some three decades later, in a similar situation, Heraclonas and Martina were forced to come to an agreement with the insurgent general Valentinus "lest the estates in those parts suffered further damage"; Nikephoros, *Breviarium* (as footnote 8), § 32.

16 Nikephoros, *Breviarium* (as footnote 8), § 2; Howard-Johnston, *Last Great War* (as footnote 4), 83; for a more detailed analysis see Raum, Theresia, *Szenen eines Überlebenskampfes Akteure und Handlungsspielräume im Imperium Romanum 610–630* (Roma Aeterna 9), Stuttgart 2021, 117–120.

17 *Life of Theodoros of Sykeon*, ed. A. J. Festugière, *Vie de Théodore de Sykéon*, 2 vols, Brussels 1970, p. 166.

18 For the role of the senate in times of political uncertainty see Haldon, *The Empire That Would Not Die* (as footnote 5), 166–169.

Heraclius, but from the senators.¹⁹ Therein they apologized for addressing the king directly, for usually only the sovereigns corresponded with each other. Then they declared that, because of the disturbance that prevailed, namely the overthrow of Maurice and the usurpation of Heraclius eight years later, they had “decided to disregard the custom which we mentioned above and, being insignificant men, to employ entreaty to such a supreme king, by sending certain of us indeed who should be deemed worthy of your footsteps.”²⁰ This letter demonstrates clearly the senate’s increased importance and powerful position. Since Heraclius was not recognized by the Persians as legitimate ruler, the senators were here acting as official representatives of the Roman Empire.²¹ While their influence on political decision-making increased, Heraclius, on the other hand, had lost nearly all options for action; his diplomatic and military powerlessness in foreign affairs had weakened his position in Constantinople.

The Persian offensive influenced the situation in the capital in a second way. When Alexandria had fallen to the Persians in 619 the breadbasket of the empire was lost and with it the grain supply for the capital. Hunger spread through Constantinople, and its population, usually protected from all threats through the thick city walls, began to feel the terrors of war. Yet before that, uncertainty in the capital had grown with every bad news from the eastern provinces. To compensate for this insecurity, the population sought refuge in faith and religion. Signs of a rise in religiosity can be found as early as the 6th century and are visible in an increasing number of processions and an intensification of church building and of icon and relic veneration.²² Under the impression of a Persian threat Sergius also improved liturgy twice, aiming to further involve the congregation in the Eucharist and to increase visualization of divine powers.²³ In times of emergency, such as an alleged flight of Heraclius²⁴ or even the riots instigated by a certain John Seismos in the eve of the siege in 626,²⁵ the

¹⁹ The sources provide insufficient information on the composition and activities of the senate. Where it is mentioned, it appears as a body. For an approximation of the institution, see Raum, *Szenen* (as footnote 16), 90–93.

²⁰ *Chronicon Paschale* (as footnote 7), s. a. 615, p. 708: ἐβουλευσάμεθα οὖν παριδεῖν τὸ ἔθος, οὐπὲρ ἀνωτέρω ἐμνήσθημεν, καὶ βραχεῖς ὄντες ἄνθρωποι πρὸς ἀρχιβασιλέα τηλικούτον τῇ δεήσει χρῆσασθαι, στέλλοντες καὶ τινὰς ἐξ ἡμῶν ὀφείλοντας τῶν ὑμετέρων ἰχνῶν ἀξιοθῆναι; trans. M. Whitby/Ma. Whitby.

²¹ The authorship of the letter is sometimes disputed. Nikos Kalogeras, for example, has argued that the letter had been drafted by the imperial chancery at the initiative of Heraclius in order to gain time to prepare his own counterattack. The senate would serve as the sender only because Heraclius did not want to disgrace himself with the submissive tone of the letter. Be that as it may, the key point is that the emperor, whether to save his personal honour or the empire, was dependent on the senate: N. Kalogeras, *The Emperor, the Embassy, the Letter and the Recipient. The Byzantine Letter of 615 to Khusrau II and its History*, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 28 (2004), 269–296, here 294–295.

²² M. Meier, *The Roman Context of Early Islam*, *Millennium* 17 (2020), 265–302, here 269.

²³ *Chronicon Paschale* (as footnote 7), s. a. 615, p. 705–706; s. a. 624, p. 714.

²⁴ Nikephoros, *Breviarium* (as footnote 8), § 8.

²⁵ *Chronicon Paschale* (as footnote 7), s. a. 626, p. 715–716.

population turned to the patriarch and went to the Hagia Sophia, rather than the Hippodrome or another imperial place, for help. The growing religiosity increased the importance of the patriarch. As a result, he became more and more a unifying figure for the urban population, who sought divine protection in troubled times and whose needs he met by intensifying pious practices. This changed the relationship of the urban population to the emperor as well, whose authority diminished in the face of the increased need for religious security.²⁶

By the early 620s, the Persian offensive had limited Heraclius' options to secure the interests of the senatorial elite and the population of the capital. The external threat had changed and restricted his domestic scope for action, while at the same time high expectations weighed on his shoulders. As a result, the senate had gained strong influence in political affairs and the population steered towards the patriarch. A good relationship with the soldiers, who have long been marginalized as a political actor, was more than ever essential. This was no easy task, since their salary had already needed to be reduced by half in 615.²⁷ But Heraclius made every effort to keep them loyal. At the birth of his son Heraclius Constantine, the guards had received a donative; likewise, by inscribing the hexagram with the contemporary battle cry "DEUS ADIUTA" Heraclius explicitly used military diction and appealed to the fighting spirit of his soldiers.²⁸ Thirdly, and for this Heraclius is probably most famous, he abandoned the sedentary kingship of the 5th to 6th century and joined his army personally. In 622, he resolved for the first time to stay with the troops during a whole season and in 624, he left Constantinople again, this time until the end of the war. His personal engagement and his presence at the army was aimed to strengthen the bond of loyalty with the soldiers and to present himself as a charismatic leader. At the same time, it enabled him to leave a political system in the capital, in which his options for action were severely limited.

²⁶ On the connection between rising disorientation in times of threat and the emperors' need to realign their monarchy see now M. Meier, *Krieg und Frieden in der Repräsentation der oströmisch-byzantinischen Kaiser (6.-7. Jahrhundert n. Chr.)*, in: Ch. I. Chrysafis/A. Hartmann/Chr. Schliephake/G. Weber (eds), *Basileus eirenophylax. Friedenskultur(en) und monarchische Repräsentation in der Antike* (Studies in Ancient Monarchies 9), Stuttgart 2023, 457–487.

²⁷ *Chronicon Paschale* (as footnote 7), s. a. 615, p. 706; M. Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine monetary economy* (as footnote 9), 494; Phillips, *Mints of Nicomedia* (as footnote 9), 21; J. Howard-Johnston, *Heraclius' Persian Campaigns and the Revival of the Eastern Roman Empire, 622–630*, *War in History* 6 (1999), 1–44, here 37; M. Meier, *Ostrom – Byzanz, Spätantike – Mittelalter. Überlegungen zum „Ende“ der Antike im Osten des Römischen Reiches*, *Millennium* 9 (2012), 187–253, here 245.

²⁸ Nikephoros, *Breviarium* (as footnote 8), § 2; L. Greisiger, *Messias, Endkaiser, Antichrist. Politische Apokalypstik unter Juden und Christen des Nahen Ostens am Vorabend der arabischen Eroberung* (Orientalia Biblica et Christiana 21), Wiesbaden 2014, 79; D.C. Whalin, A note reconsidering the message of Heraclius' silver hexagram, circa AD 615, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 112 (2019), 221–232, here 231.

During Heraclius' absence

While Heraclius campaigned in the East, Constantinople was not paralyzed. On the contrary, the capital had to master new challenges. In 626, the greatest of these challenges stood right outside the city walls in the form of a huge host of Avars and Slavs. The khagan of the Avars had reached the hinterland of Constantinople in the summer and was now besieging the capital.²⁹ Although the siege lasted only ten days, it was a hard test for the capital and its new leadership. At the same time, this is the case, where we can see best how Constantinople functioned without Heraclius.

On his departure, Heraclius had invested the patriarch Sergius, the magister officiorum Bonus and his own fourteen-year-old son Heraclius Constantine with imperial power.³⁰ Each of them seems to have fulfilled a special task. *Theodore Syncellus*, an eyewitness to the events with close connections to the court and the patriarch, gives some clues to their respective roles in his sermon on the siege, written on the occasion of the Avars' withdrawal. About the patriarch he reports: "The Preceptor of the city, spending his nights in prayer and speeches, was the worthy archpriest, our Isaiah who knew himself the concentration of the troops and their armament. The fact that they raised their hands to God, and asked the Virgin for assistance and protection, was a weapon, sabre and shield for all the inhabitants of the city, because our archpriest gathered everyone, if he were a priest or clerk, living as a monk or among the people, — of the men of any age, from the child to the old man, and by the following words, as if he armed them, he harangued them to be brave and not discouraged."³¹ Accordingly, the patriarch prayed with the people, he climbed the city walls, which he had decorated with images of the Virgin, and held fierce speeches addressed to the khagan but intended to be heard within the walls. His aim was to strengthen the resilience of the city's population by making the city a bulwark of Christianity against all evils, protected by the Virgin herself.³²

Meanwhile, the magister officiorum Bonus organized the military defense, which included strategic decisions, as we learn from the *Chronicon Paschale*. When the ambassador Athanasius returned from the Avar camp, he delivered the khagan's de-

²⁹ For the events see now Howard-Johnston, *Last Great War* (as footnote 4), 268–284.

³⁰ Theophanes, *Chronographia* (as footnote 9), a. m. 6113, p. 303; Nikephoros, *Breviarium* (as footnote 8), § 12.

³¹ Theodoros Syncellus, *Homily* (as footnote 3), p. 79: Ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡ πόλις ἐν λιταῖς καὶ παννύχοις δεήσεσι διδάσκαλον εἶχον οὕτως στρατολογεῖν ἐπιστάμενον καὶ οὕτως ὀπλίζοντα, τὸν καθ' ἡμᾶς Ἰσαΐαν, τὸν ἱεράρχην τὸν τίμιον. Καὶ τοῦτο ἦν ὅπλον καὶ ῥομφαία καὶ θυρεὸς τοῖς τῆς πόλεως πάσης οἰκήτορσι τὸ αἶρειν πρὸς Θεὸν τὰς χεῖρας καὶ τὴν παρθένον ἐξαιτεῖν εἰς βοηθὸν καὶ ὑπέρμαχον· ἅπαν γὰρ ὅσον ἐν ἱερεῦσι τελεῖ καὶ ὅσον ἐν κλήρῳ καὶ μονάδι βίῳ καὶ λαῷ κατατέτακται, πᾶσάν τε ἡλικίαν μέχρι νηπίου καὶ γέροντος ἀθροίζων εἰς ἓν ἀρχιερεὺς ὁ ἡμέτερος θαρρύνει παρήγει καὶ μὴ ἐκλύεσθαι, τοῦτοις ὀπλίζων τοῖς ῥήμασι; trans. R. Pearse 2007.

³² Theodoros Syncellus, *Homily* (as footnote 3), p. 80; A. Cameron, *Images of Authority: Elites and Icons in Late Sixth-Century Byzantium*, *Past & Present* 84 (1979), 3–35, here 29.

mand to surrender. “And so when the same most glorious Athanasius entered and announced this to Bonus, the most glorious patrician and magister, and to the other officials, they reproached him for having thus cringed before the accursed Chagan (. . .) And then the officials gave him a response that was intended by every means to cause the accursed Chagan (. . .) to approach the wall, that is the city.”³³ Both in the Latin translation of the 17th century second edition of the *Chronicon Paschale* and in the English translation by Mary and Michael Whitby, a “not” is added to the senators’ reply to change the meaning from an obviously aggressive strategy by the magistrates, virtually inviting the khagan to move closer, to a defensive stance. However, at least in the relevant manuscript Codex Vaticanus Graecus 1941 from the 10th century, there is no support for this variation.³⁴ Considering that Constantinople was a well-fortified city in a naturally protected location and that sieges were a high risk even for conventionally trained and equipped armies, an unexpected response intended to provoke an Avar attack on the walls should not be immediately dismissed. A prolonged siege would also have allowed the khagan to intensify his attack and would have harmed the physical and human defenses in the enclosed city.³⁵ In any case, the passage clearly shows that the senators were involved in strategic matters, which fits well with the observations made above. As a decision-making body, they obviously worked closely with the military leadership of the city and did not hesitate to take risky choices.

Heraclius Constantine was not involved in such decisions. As the first-born son, he had been crowned emperor at an early age and since then appeared alongside his father on coins and in the dating of public and private documents, which underlines his status as co-emperor.³⁶ However, during Heraclius’ absence, and especially during the siege, he does not appear to have been engaged in any political or military deci-

³³ *Chronicon Paschale* (as footnote 5), s. a. 626, p. 718–719: εἰσελθόντος οὖν αὐτοῦ Ἀθανασίου τοῦ ἐνδοξοτάτου, καὶ ταῦτα ἀπαγγέλαντος Βόνῳ τῷ ἐνδοξοτάτῳ πατρικίῳ καὶ μαγίστρῳ καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς ἄρχουσιν, κάκεινῳ ἐπιμεμφαμένῳ αὐτῷ οὕτως ὑποπεσόντι τῷ ἐπικατάρατῳ Χαγάνῳ (. . .) καὶ τότε δέδωκαν αὐτῷ οἱ ἄρχοντες ἀνταπόκρισιν ὀφείλουσαν πάντως παρασκευάσαι τὸν ἐπικατάρατον Χαγάνον πλησιάσαι τῷ τείχει ἥγουν τῇ πόλει; trans. M. Whitby/Ma. Whitby; Raum, *Szenen* (as footnote 16), 164.

³⁴ M. Whitby/Ma. Whitby (as footnote 7), 172 with note 461; C. (du Fresne) du Cange, *Paschalion Seu Chronicon Paschale: A Mundo Conditio Ad Heraclii Imperatoris Annum Vicesimum*, Venice 1729, 313; *Vat. Gr.* 1941 fol. 283.

³⁵ Howard-Johnston, *Last Great War* (as footnote 4), 275.

³⁶ A useful overview of the coins is now presented in N. Hächler, Heraclius Constantine III – Emperor of Byzantium (613–641), *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 115 (1) (2022), 69–116, here 112–115; for the novels as official documents: J. Konidaris, Die Novellen des Kaisers Herakleios, in: D. Simon (ed.), *Fontes Minores* 5 (Forschungen zur byzantinischen Rechtsgeschichte 8), Frankfurt 1982, 33–106; for the dating on a private epitaph in distant Rome: R.G.R. Hunsucker/E.J.J. Roels, Eine vergessene Erinnerung an das byzantinische Rom: Neudeutung und Rezeptionsgeschichte einer Grabinschrift aus dem 7. Jahrhundert in der S. Cecilia in Trastevere, in: M. Verhoeven *et alii* (eds), *Monuments & memory: Christian cult buildings and constructions of the past: essays in honour of Sible de Blaauw*, Turnhout 2016, 31–42.

sions. Instead, Heraclius Constantine prayed publicly for the protection of the city, donated gifts to the attackers and led the solemn procession to the Church of Blachernae after the siege.³⁷ Heraclius Constantine's role as emperor, as it appears from the sources, was thus limited to religious and ceremonial contexts.³⁸ Nevertheless, the young monarch was more than a "shadow emperor".

Through this behavior in public and even towards the enemy, he demonstrated piety and devotion and set an example of a God-fearing Christian. This image is also conveyed in particular in the poems of the court poet *George of Pisidia*. In his poem *On the Resurrection*, written on the occasion of the Easter celebrations in the 620s and dedicated to Heraclius Constantine, George describes the young emperor as pure and uncorrupted: "And now you carry a bright heart, for you have no dark faults."³⁹ This motif of light and darkness ultimately serves George as a comparison with the resurrected Christ: just as Jesus Christ rose as a radiant light at Easter, Heraclius Constantine is a light in the present darkness. This image, by which the young emperor is equated with Christ, was more than exaggerated rhetoric aimed at pleasing court. George thus picks up on existing fears and uncertainties in Constantinople and presents Heraclius Constantine as a bearer of hope. Even more: For centuries, emperors had used displays of piety and devotion to God as a means of demonstrating their suitability for high office. Justinian, however, excessively exploited this representation in order to prevent a loss of its community-building and authority-legitimizing function in face of the threats in the sixth century. This *hypersacralization*, as Mischa Meier terms it, limited Justinian's scope for action and that of his successors as it demanded ever increasing demonstrations of the emperor's piety.⁴⁰ Precisely because Heraclius Constantine embodied youthful innocence and piety, however, he was able to fulfill the increased expectations of the emperor's sacrality. Heraclius Constantine was thus more than a dynastic placeholder who compensated for the absence of his father.⁴¹ Through his performance and his presentation as a pious, Christ-like ruler, he secured the fragile authority of the Roman monarchy in a moment of extreme threat. At the same time, he contributed to changing the image of the Roman emperor by acquiring the reputation of an emperor in Christ.⁴²

37 Theodoros Syncellus, *Homily* (as footnote 2), p. 79, 81–83; Nikephoros, *Breviarium* (as footnote 8), § 13.

38 This development is similar to that of earlier child emperors; M.A. McEvoy, *Child Emperor Rule in the Late Roman West, AD 367–455*, Oxford 2013, 308–320.

39 George of Pisidia, *In sanctam resurrectionem* 41–42, ed. A. Pertusi, *Giorgio di Pisidia, Poemi I. Panegirici epici* (Studia Patristica et Byzantina 7), Ettal 1959: Λευκὴν δὲ καὶ σὺ νῦν φορεῖς τὴν καρδίαν | Τὰς γὰρ ζοφώδεις οὐκ ἔχεις ἀμαρτίας.

40 Meier, *Krieg und Frieden* (as footnote 26), 474.

41 Hächler, Heraclius Constantine III (as footnote 36), 81; Viernmann, *Der schwitzende Kaiser* (as footnote 3), 165, 184.

42 In this respect, the changed title *πρωτοὶ ἐν Χριστῷ* in the fourth novel, issued in 629, might be attributed to his authorship; Raum, *Szenen* (as footnote 16), 214–216.

The image of the emperor was also shaped in another way, for *George of Pisidia* described not only the present emperor, but also the absent one. A peak period of his production was in the years 622 to 628, when, in addition to *On the Resurrection*, George also wrote the poems *On Bonus* and *Avar War*. Because the poems were composed during Heraclius' absence, they were not recited before the emperor, but were intended for a Constantinopolitan audience. The latter's expectations of the ruler thus formed the authoritative framework for the poet, and the distant Heraclius himself became the projection screen for these expectations. This is significant when Heraclius' pious deeds are compared to those of Heracles or when in the poem *On Bonus* he is first described as κοσμοπόρυστης, "saviour of the world":⁴³ George draws here, under the specific impressions of the 620s in Constantinople, a picture of an emperor whom the capital had not seen for years. Only when Heraclius returned to Constantinople was it possible for the metropolitan audience to check whether their image of the emperor matched reality.

After Heraclius' return

Meanwhile, Heraclius had lived among soldiers and presented himself as a warlike emperor for many years. This can be clearly seen on bronze folles, on which he is depicted in military dress since the early 630s.⁴⁴ In historiographical sources and in the poems of *George of Pisidia* addressed to (present) Heraclius, the emperor also appears as a warrior who encourages his soldiers by taking on the dangers and hardships of war.⁴⁵ This image of a fearless, fighting warrior is exemplified in an undated epigram by *George of Pisidia*, in which he exhorts the emperor who had already dressed himself in military attire: "Having clad your foot in a black-dipped sandal may you dye it red with Persian blood."⁴⁶

⁴³ George of Pisidia (as footnote 39), *On Bonus* 7; George of Pisidia (as footnote 39), *Avar War* 57; M. Whitby, *Defender of the Cross: George of Pisidia on the Emperor Heraclius and his deputies*, in: M. Whitby (ed.), *The Propaganda of Power: The Role of Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (Mnemosyne Supplementum 183), Leiden 1998, 247–273, here 250–251.

⁴⁴ Heraclius in military dress: Folles (Constantinople, 629/630–640) Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection, ed. Alfred Bellinger / Philip Grierson, Washington, D.C., 1968, II 1, nos. 105–116. And a rare variety with Heraclius holding a sword: Folles (Constantinople, 629/630) P. Lampinen, *A New Variety of Heraclius Folles*, *Numismatic Circular* 109 (2001), 5.

⁴⁵ Nikephoros, *Breviarium* (as footnote 6), § 14; Sebeos, *Armenian History* 38, trans. R.W. Thomson/J. Howard-Johnston, *The Armenian History attributed to Sebeos*, Liverpool 1999, p. 81; George of Pisidia (as footnote 39), *Persian Expedition* I 196–199; III 94–99; 107–108; 112–120.

⁴⁶ George of Pisidia (as footnote 39), *Epigrammata* 110: μελαμβαφές πέδιλον ἐνδύσας πόδα βάψαις ἐρυθρόν Περσικῶν ἐξ αἱμάτων.

This does not mean that the war against the Persians was free of religious implications. On the contrary, the battle cry “Deus adiuta”, prominently imprinted on the hexagrams, appealed to divine assistance on the battlefield, acheiropoieta, miracle-working holy images, were carried on the campaign and a Zoroastrian temple at Gandzak was destroyed.⁴⁷ But these examples are part of a longer development in which the belief in divine assistance gradually permeated the Roman army and which can already be grasped since the campaign of Maurice against the Persians in 581.⁴⁸

As far as can be said on the basis of the scanty tradition, Heraclius’ triumphal entry into the capital, probably in the autumn of 629, also seems to recall earlier triumphs against the Persians, when the victorious commander was received with honors in the capital by the emperor and elephants were presented as war booty from Persia.⁴⁹ When Heraclius had arrived in Hiereia on the Asian shore of the Bosphorus, he was received with victory acclamations by the inhabitants of Constantinople, led by his son, the co-emperor Heraclius Constantine, and by the patriarch, and during the subsequent celebrations four elephants were displayed in the hippodrome.⁵⁰ But the situation in the capital had changed since the end of the 6th century, and neither a triumph nor the image of an emperor as a victorious commander were suitable to fulfill increased expectations as to imperial sacrality. Heraclius’ arrival in Constantinople is hardly perceivable in the sources, with Theophanes and Nikephoros mentioning it briefly as a prelude to his final victory.

Heraclius’ real triumph occurred six months later, when he finally recovered and returned the relic of the True Cross in March 630. With a solemn entry into Jerusalem, he restored the important relic to its rightful place from where it had been stolen by the Persians sixteen years earlier. The event evoked Christian imagery, recalling both the story of the first Christian emperor, Constantine, whose mother Helena had identified the relic according to legend, and, more importantly, Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. It was only by taking up these Christian metaphors in the *restitutio*

⁴⁷ Deus adiuta: see footnote 22; Acheiropoieta: George of Pisidia (as footnote 39), *Persian Expedition* I 139–151; Destruction of the temple at Gandzak: Sebeos, *Armenian History* (as footnote 45), 38, p. 81; Theophanes, *Chronographia* (as footnote 9), a. m. 6114, p. 308.

⁴⁸ Acheiropoieta and other relics: Theophylaktos Simokates, *History* 5, 16, ed. C. de Boor, *Theophylakti Simocatae historiae*, Leipzig 1887 (on a campaign of Maurice against the Avars); Theophanes, *Chronographia* (as footnote 9), a. m. 6078, p. 255 (on a campaign of Philippicus against the Persians); battle cry: Maurikios, *Strategikon* 12 B 16, ed. T. Dennis, *Mauricii Strategicon* (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 17), Vienna 1981, p. 442; Meier, *The Roman Context of Early Islam* (as footnote 22), 279–280.

⁴⁹ Triumph of Maurice in 581: Theophanes, *Chronographia* (as footnote 9), a. m. 6074, p. 251–252; war elephants making obeisance to the emperor and to Christian sites: John of Ephesos, *Ecclesiastical History* 3,2,48, trans. R. Payne Smith, *The Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History of John of Ephesus*, Oxford 1860, p. 162.

⁵⁰ Theophanes, *Chronographia* (as footnote 7), a. m. 6119, p. 328; Nikephoros, *Breviarium* (as footnote 8), § 19. Unfortunately, Nikephoros gives no indication as to whether Heraclius’ elephants also made the sign of the cross.

crucis that Heraclius' image as emperor acquired the religious connotations it needed to fulfill Constantinopolitan expectations on the emperor's sacrality; Heraclius became a Christ-like emperor, the κοσμορύστης for whom *George of Pisidia* had asked four years earlier.⁵¹ The restoration of the cross is remembered in many contemporary and later sources as the final victory and the climax of Heraclius' reign, giving rise to a wide and varied reception. However, given the changed realities in the capital, the return of the cross in Jerusalem was rather a necessary step to reconstitute Heraclius' status as emperor in Constantinople.⁵²

The successful reintegration into the capital was, however, apparently only of short duration. When Arab expansion began to spread to the eastern provinces from around 632, Heraclius left the capital again. Unlike a good ten years earlier, he no longer commanded personally, but confined himself to making his presence felt in the region and supervising military defence.⁵³ Also unlike in the war against the Persians, his departure does not even seem to have caused a debate in Constantinople.⁵⁴ In the meantime, Heraclius Constantine had grown up and had a son, the future emperor Constans II, who was baptized by Patriarch Sergius in the church of Blachernae on 3 November 631.⁵⁵ Furthermore, Heraclius Constantine no longer assumed only ceremonial but also judicial duties, as the indictment against his uncle Theodore shows. Theodore, who was said to have railed against his brother Heraclius whom he had accompanied on campaign, was not tried on the spot in Syria but sent to Constantinople for a public trial reminiscent of that of Priscus in 612. This fact speaks volumes with regard to the political center of the empire: it did not change with the (senior) emperor's location, but remained with the (junior) emperor in Constantinople.⁵⁶

⁵¹ George of Pisidia (as footnote 39), *Heraclius* I 70.

⁵² There is an extensive literature on the *restitutio crucis* and its manifold implications which cannot be reproduced here in full: J.W. Drijvers, Heraclius and the Restitutio Crucis. Notes on symbolism and ideology, in: G.J. Reinink/B. Stolte (eds), *The Reign of Heraclius (610–641). Crisis and Confrontation* (Groningen studies in cultural change 2), Leuven 2002, 175–190; Greisiger, *Messias, Endkaiser, Antichrist* (as footnote 28); A. Sommerlechner, Kaiser Herakleios und die Rückkehr des Heiligen Kreuzes nach Jerusalem, *Römische Historische Mitteilungen* 45 (2003), 319–360; Meier, *The Roman Context of Early Islam* (as footnote 22); Y.P. Stoyanov, *Defenders and enemies of the true cross: the Sasanian conquest of Jerusalem in 614 and Byzantine ideology of Anti-Persian warfare* (Veröffentlichungen zur Iranistik 61), Wien 2011; C. Zuckerman, Heraclius and the return of the Holy Cross, in: C. Zuckerman (ed.), *Constructing the seventh century* (= Travaux et mémoires 17), Paris 2013, 197–218.

⁵³ Nikephoros, *Breviarium* (as footnote 8), § 20; 23; Theophanes, *Chronographia* (as footnote 9), a. m. 6125, p. 337; Kaegi, *Heraclius* (as footnote 4), 235–236.

⁵⁴ For the debate in 622: George of Pisidia (as footnote 39), *Persian Expedition* I 112–129.

⁵⁵ Theophanes, *Chronographia* (as footnote 9), a. m. 6122, p. 335.

⁵⁶ Nikephoros, *Breviarium* (as footnote 8), § 20. In addition, Heraclius Constantine was active as a builder of a palace and of the assembly hall of the senate, both probably to be dated after 630; *Anthologia Graeca*, 9,655, ed. and trans. W.R. Paton, Cambridge 1917, p. 363; Nikephoros, *Breviarium* (as footnote 8), § 29.

The position of Heraclius himself, on the other hand, had become vulnerable. The more the legitimacy of the emperor was derived from divine providence, military defeats must have appeared to be a punishment from God.⁵⁷ Due to the defeats against the Arab troops Heraclius had lost the nimbus of the victorious, Christ-like emperor. The most visible expression is the conspiracy of Armenian elites against him, in which his illegitimate son Athalaricus and his nephew Theodore are said to have been involved. The sources are scanty here, the most detailed account being given in the *Armenian History*, attributed to Sebeos and written around 650, who places the conspiracy in the context of local power struggles in Armenia.⁵⁸

The capital had been little shaken by this event, which shows that neither the dynasty as a whole nor the emperor in Constantinople were called into question. Apart from this, the tradition of developments in the capital after 630 is extremely sparse. Nevertheless, the impression is given that the capital was obviously used to Heraclius' absence. The power structure that had developed there, consisting of the patriarch as a unifying figure for the urban population, a senate that had gained substantial power and influence, and the emperor Heraclius Constantine, is to be regarded as a changed but stable imperial system. In this respect, the situation after 632 resembles the last days of Justin II's reign, when the demented emperor was no longer able to exercise his office. Justin had retained the title of emperor, but Tiberius, whom he had appointed Caesar, was in charge of government affairs. It was a delicate situation with an open outcome which was probably only mastered by the fact that Tiberius did not challenge the emperor and at the same time successfully courted the acceptance of the Constantinopolitan people and the elites.⁵⁹ I do not want the parallel here to be extended to the much-discussed aspect of Heraclius' physical and mental health; what is decisive is that the Roman monarchy allowed, albeit in exceptional cases, the rule of a second emperor who maintained political stability in Constantinople. As such, Heraclius Constantine was respected as a legitimate ruler by the population and the elites with whom he had once endured the siege of Constantinople, and was esteemed as an orthodox Christian.⁶⁰ When, after the death of his father Heraclius in 641, his stepmother Martina and his half-brother Heraclonas tried to seize power, he enjoyed in particular the support of the senatorial elites at court as well as of the population of Constantinople, which also passed to his son Constans II after his early

⁵⁷ Meier, *Krieg und Frieden* (as footnote 26), 463.

⁵⁸ Nikephoros, *Breviarium* (as footnote 8), § 24; Sebeos, *Armenian History* (as footnote 45), 41, p. 92–94 with commentary by James Howard-Johnston at 229.

⁵⁹ Rene Pfeilschifter, *Der Kaiser und Konstantinopel. Kommunikation und Konfliktaustrag in einer spätantiken Metropole* (Millennium-Studien 44), Berlin 2013, 142–147.

⁶⁰ Michael Psellos, *Historia Syntomos* § 77, rec. and trans. W. J. Aerts, Berlin 1990.

death.⁶¹ Although the monarch had become quite mobile in the early seventh century, Roman monarchy remained largely focused on Constantinople.

Conclusion

“It’s a dangerous business, Frodo, going out of your door.”⁶² Bilbo Baggins had made this experience himself when he left the Shire for his adventures. Unlike Bilbo, no adventures had caused Heraclius to leave his established place in Constantinople. Rather, the Persian invasion and the attacks of the Avars and Slavs threatened security interests of the senatorial elite, the urban population and the soldiers, challenging the emperor’s standing. Under military pressure from outside, Heraclius’ position inside the empire weakened. In an only seemingly paradoxical way, he decided to leave the capital in order to restore his position as emperor in Constantinople.

In Tolkien’s work, Bilbo does not find his place in the Shire after returning from his adventures. Similarly, upon his own return, Heraclius faced the challenge of reasserting his position, and – like Bilbo –, he only barely managed to do so. While he had long presented himself as a soldier emperor, the *restitutio crucis* in 630 made it possible to tie in with the increased religiosity in the capital and thus gain a position as a victorious, Christ-like emperor in Constantinople. With the Arab expansion that began shortly afterwards, however, the image quickly lost its impact and there seems to have been no more place for Heraclius in Constantinople.

One reason for this could be seen in the developments during his absence. Constantinople underwent significant changes, reshaping the power dynamics within the capital. With the temporary loss of the eastern provinces due to the Persian War, Constantinople had become the sole religious, social and economic center of a now metropolitanocentric empire. The elites increasingly insisted on their interests being taken into account in the political concerns of the imperial court. The senate, which had already gained influence before 622, consolidated its position as a decision-making body and also supported risky military decisions during the siege in 626. The experience of this traumatic event probably helped to accelerate and intensify the formation of a common Christian identity. The patriarch provided the necessary spiritual support and had become an indispensable figure of integration for the capital’s population. Heraclius Constantine, as a child emperor, was able to respond to the increased ex-

61 Nikephoros, *Breviarium* (as footnote 8), § 28; W. Brandes, „Juristische“ Krisenbewältigung im 7. Jahrhundert? Die Prozesse gegen Papst Martin I. und Maximos Homologites, *Fontes minores* 10 (1998), 141–212, here 211; J. Haldon, The fate of the late Roman senatorial Elite: extinction or transformation?, in: J. Haldon/L.I. Conrad, (eds), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East 6: Elites Old and New in the Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East* (Studies in late antiquity and early Islam 1), Princeton 2004, 179–223, here 191–192.

62 J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, London ³1975, 78.

pectations of the sacrality of the emperorship and thus preserved the legitimacy of the Roman monarchy. The shared idea of a God-protected empire ruled by a Christ-loving emperor strengthened Eastern Roman society. These developments during the Persian War thus contributed to the resilience that John Haldon has declared to be essential for the survival of the Roman Empire in the face of Arab expansion.⁶³

⁶³ Haldon, *The Empire That Would Not Die* (as footnote 5), 287–293.

James Howard-Johnston

The Arab conquest of the Roman Levant

Western Eurasia was utterly transformed in less than two decades in the seventh century, as the Arabs, inspired by a new faith with real grip and able to draw on the organisational capability of a highly developed city-state, pressed out from Arabia and took control of the fertile lands which envelop the northern segment of the desert. By the middle of the eighth century, having overrun North Africa and conquered most of Spain, they came face to face with the Franks in southern France, while, far to the east, beyond Khurāsān and Transoxiana, they were entering the Chinese sphere in Central Asia. Historians are dumbfounded at their ability to sustain the momentum of their outward movement over so many generations. No less astonishing was the speed with which they began to consolidate their authority over so large a portion of the developed world – whole regions of the Roman empire, all the Sasanian empire, and the refractory peoples of the Transcaucasian borderlands between those two once great powers. But the greatest achievement of all was the first – the initial victories which broke Roman and Persian military power and opened the way for future advances west, north and east from the Fertile Crescent.

As Andrew Marsham argues in his paper, the lineaments of a grand strategy may be discerned behind Arab actions. It took the form of a series of carefully targeted offensives. Palestine was the first objective. It was the Holy Land for Muslims as much as Jews and Christians. It was the most accessible segment of the Fertile Crescent, and it had the closest connections with the Hijāz, *qua* principal trading partner of Mecca. The strategy used (and there is clear evidence of strategic planning) and the battles fought must be observed and understood, if the conquest of Palestine and indeed Syria to its north is to be explained – the necessary first steps in the establishment of Arab hegemony in the Middle East and whole swathes of territory to the east and west.¹

Before I plunge into the *Quellenforschung* which must underlay any reconstruction of events, I must recant from what I have written in the recent past.² I placed too much confidence in a relatively well-informed and near-contemporary Armenian source which has its notice about the Battle of Yarmūk follow immediately on one about an early engagement east of the Dead Sea, datable to 634. At the same time, I was dismissive of a version of events given by the early ninth century Byzantine his-

1 F. M. Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, Princeton 1981; H. Kennedy, *The Great Arab Conquests: How the Spread of Islam Changed the World we live in*, London 2007; R.G. Hoyland, *In God's Path: The Arab Conquests and the Creation of an Islamic Empire*, New York 2015.

2 J. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century*, Oxford 2010, 464–467, and *The Chronology of the Arab Conquests*, in: T. Goodwin (ed.), *Coinage and History in the Seventh Century Near East* 5, London 2017, 41–48.

torian Theophanes, on the grounds that he was far too beholden to an unreliable west Syrian history composed in the middle of the eighth century. In consequence, I dated the operations which led to the submission of Palestine *before* Arab forces pushed north into Syria. Because of its location on the Yarmūk river, below the Golan Heights and on the southern edge of the Leja, a natural barrier of *harras* laid across the *bad-iyā*, I viewed the Battle of Yarmūk and the crushing defeat inflicted there on the Romans and their principal Arab clients, the Ghassān, as opening up the route north into Syria. There another Roman army was mobilised, which managed to halt and reverse the Arab advance south of Emesa, but was then defeated in a second set-piece battle a little north of Damascus. Both these battles I placed after the Battle of Yarmūk, and saw them as enabling the Arabs to take over Syria in the year 635–636. With their authority reaching the right bank of the Euphrates, they could then raid the Tur Abdin in 636, and set about the conquest of Mesopotamia.

The reason for my change of mind has nothing to do with any outside pressure, but is the result of an entirely internal show-trial, instituted in the course of preparations for the Tübingen conference. It was triggered by the realisation that *a non-Islamic source, written within a decade or so of the events*, covers key episodes in the Arab advance into the Levant, almost certainly in the correct chronological order. It places the Battle of Yarmūk at the end of the sequence, so in the year 635–636. It thus returns the battle to its place of honour, as the decisive Roman defeat, which led, within a short time, to the submission of both Palestine and Syria.

A brief overview of the source material

It is only natural for us to look, in the first place to the Arabs, the victors, for an account of operations in Palestine and Syria. Despite all the pressures which bore on historians from their ambient culture and the contested issues of their own time – and the earliest surviving Arabic sources postdate the conquests by ca. 150 years or more – we should expect them to have striven to retail genuine history, given the role of the conquests (*futūḥ*) in Allah's providential scheme. Of course, later concerns loom large at times, in sections where efforts are made to establish exactly the roles of different individuals in commanding positions (which had consequences for the future).³ It is also plain that a great deal of anecdotal detail has entered extant narratives in the process of their transmission and elaboration over time, and that it obscures the main thrust of events. As Stephen Humphreys has observed, it is *the enlisted man's*

3 C. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, Cambridge 2003, 3–54.

view which is mainly represented in Arab accounts of the conquests.⁴ But these should surely be viewed as extraneous additions and embellishments to a core, possibly skeletal, presentation of *important episodes, listed in the correct chronological order*. That is the general conclusion about early Islamic historical writing to be found in *Witnesses*.⁵ And I stand by it.

But there are undoubtedly serious problems with the Islamic material dealing with the conquest of the Roman Levant. In the first place, a war of attack and counter-attack by field armies, of which city notables were mere spectators, until it became clear that there was no prospect of relief and they submitted *en masse* (to spare their valuable suburban properties), was transformed into one dominated by siege-warfare. In the second place, as was shown many years ago by Fred Donner, there is serious disagreement about chronology. He detected several distinct later reconstructions of events within the various preserved historical traditions – all of which incidentally give the impression that the main Arab attack was aimed at the join between Palestine and Syria, namely the Ḥawrān and Jebel Druze, and that the invaders proceeded thereafter to drive both north into and over Syria and south into Palestine.⁶ This indecision is in marked contrast to Arab traditions about the conquest of Sasanian Mesopotamia and Khuzistan, which agree with each other and also tally in their essentials with accounts in independent near-contemporary Armenian and east Syrian sources.⁷ Something has had an extra distorting effect on the traditions about the Levant. That something will be sought out at the end of my paper.

The prudent attitude is to be sceptical about the traditions transmitted in Arab sources, and to turn to non-Arab, non-Muslim sources first and see whether it is possible to reconstruct an outline narrative from them. Then and only then may we go through the Arabic texts, to identify the nuggets of authentic material which they contain. It is to a source written by a west Syrian, to which we should turn in the first instance – namely the lost History of Theophilus of Edessa, which was a prime source for Theophanes' account of the first century or so of Byzantine-Arab relations. Theophilus' text was also exploited (more fully) by Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, patriarch of Antioch (818–845), whose account (written in Syriac) was recycled by Michael the Syrian at the end of the twelfth century and the author of an anonymous chronicle down to the year 1234. A fourth derivative, in Arabic rather than Syriac and somewhat abbreviated, was written by Agapius of Membij in the tenth century.⁸ There is a seri-

4 An observation in the paper Humphreys gave at the 1996 St. Andrews conference on al-Ṭabarī, which is not, alas, published in the proceedings edited by Hugh Kennedy (*Al-Ṭabarī: A Medieval Muslim Historian and His Work*, Princeton 2008).

5 Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses* (as footnote 2), 358–366, 370–379.

6 Donner, *Conquests* (as footnote 1), 128–142.

7 Donner, *Conquests* (as footnote 1), 190–217.

8 R.G. Hoyland, *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle and the Circulation of Historical Knowledge in Late Antiquity and Early Islam* (Translated Texts for Historians 57), Liverpool 2011, 4–15, 19–23.

ous problem, though – the presence of *pollutants*, for which Theophilus should be held responsible. As well as being a scholar with a strong interest in Greek culture, he was politically engaged and rose high in Abbasid service.⁹ He was not immune to the influence of Islamic historical traditions, and they have left their mark on his text and its later derivatives.¹⁰ So this main strand of west Syrian historical tradition should also be put aside for the moment, and we should turn to near-contemporary sources, written by Christian authors in circles uninfluenced by contemporary Islamic views, let alone by later Islamic historical traditions.

Five key sources

There are five near-contemporary non-Muslim sources from which we can extract the essential data about the Arab conquest of the Roman Levant. I shall take them in chronological order of composition.

First, we have the text of a sermon preached by the newly appointed Patriarch of Jerusalem, Sophronius, on Christmas Day 634. It is dated to a year when Christmas fell on Sunday. The only such year during Sophronius' short patriarchate (634–639) was 634. Apart from the religious theme of the Nativity and what it means for the salvation of humanity, his main concern is with the danger of travel outside the city because of Arab raiding bands.¹¹

Next comes a short chronicle, written in Syriac soon after 635–636 in the Tur Abdin (northern Syria), by the individual mentioned in the final notice, Thomas the priest, or a fellow-monk of his in one of two named monasteries in Mardin which were raided that year. This chronicle was included in a later compendium of world history, known as the *Chronicle to the Year 724*.¹² The notices in the embedded chronicle are precisely dated. Where they can be tested, they turn out to be accurate. The most useful control is a source of proven worth, the *Chronicon Paschale*, which was put together in Constantinople around 630 and included, in its last part, much document-based material. It seems reasonable to extrapolate and to take uncorroborated dates – e.g. for the fall of Alexandria to the Persians (619), the evacuation of Egypt (ten years later), or Heraclius' summit meeting with Shahrbaraz, which is placed at Arabissus in the Anti-Taurus (July 629) – as no less accurate, especially as they fit what is

⁹ Hoyland, *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle* (as footnote 8), 6–7.

¹⁰ Hoyland, *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle* (as footnote 8), 26–34.

¹¹ Sophronius, *Homily on the Nativity*, ed. H. Usener, *Weinachtspredigt des Sophronius*, *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 41 (1886), 500–516.

¹² *Chronicon miscellaneum ad annum Domini 724 pertinens*, ed. E.W. Brooks, *Chronica Minora*, vol. 2 (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Scriptores Syri 3), Louvain 1960, trans. A. Palmer, *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles* (Translated Texts for Historians 15), Liverpool 1993.

known otherwise of the circumstances.¹³ If the dating is accurate, it is likely that the substance of the notices is also trustworthy. This is especially true of the last two notices, which include details – about the casualties and consequences of an Arab victory inland from Gaza, and a raid into the Tur Abdin following the occupation of Syria.¹⁴

The evidence of the chronicle to 724 tallies with that of a long colophon written on the guard leaf of a Gospel book now in the British Library (BL Add.14,461). The colophon, which has faded, is fragmentary and hard to decipher. Muḥammad is mentioned. So are Arabs and Romans. Emesa and Damascus feature in the story. The Romans pursue the Arabs but then flee from the vicinity of Damascus . . . Later they assemble at Gabitha (al-Jābiya). Finally, a figure of 50,000 is given for the dead. The date for the engagement, near Gabitha, is given as 20th August 636. The writer appears to be a contemporary, since at one point he says, ‘we saw/rejoiced’.¹⁵

Somewhat fuller notices are to be found in the Armenian History attributed in the past by some scholars to Sebeos, which should more properly be entitled the *History of Khosrov* (Khusro II [590–628]), the main subject, and attributed to an anonymous clerical author at work in Dvin, the ecclesiastical capital of Armenia.¹⁶ It is simply called *Khosrov* in the table of contents of the only manuscript to preserve the text, Matenadaran 2639, written in Bitlis in 1672. The author had access to archives at Dvin and made use of documentary material which he found there. He can be shown, by comparison with sources of proven worth, to have been a conscientious recorder of recent and contemporary events. The most telling comparison is between the speech he puts in the mouth of the Emperor Heraclius as he addresses the Persian general Shahen from a boat off the shore at Chalcedon in 615. The terms offered by Heraclius correspond in essentials to those outlined by the Senate in a grovelling letter to the *shahanshah* Khusro, which is preserved in the *Chronicon Paschale*. The text of the *History of Khosrov* was finished in 655, on the eve of the first Arab civil war, and was updated with a postscript when it was over in 661.¹⁷

The fifth source is familiar to Byzantinists who rely on Theophanes’ *Chronographia* and the short history written in classicising Greek by his rough contemporary, the Patriarch Nicephorus.¹⁸ The first part of Nicephorus’ work is largely based on it. It is the continuation in two parts of a universal history written by John of Antioch,

¹³ Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses* (as footnote 2), 59–66.

¹⁴ *Chron. 724* (as footnote 12), p. 147, l. 25–148, l. 9, trans. Palmer, 18–19.

¹⁵ *Chron. 724* (as footnote 12), p. 75, trans. Palmer, 1–4 (cited below as BL colophon).

¹⁶ Ps.-Sebeos: *Patmut'iwn Sebeosi*, ed. G.V. Abgaryan, Erevan 1979, trans. R.W. Thomson and J. Howard-Johnston, *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos* (Translated Texts for Historians 31), 2 vols, Liverpool 1999, I *Translation and Notes*, II *Historical Commentary*.

¹⁷ Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses* (as footnote 2), 70–102.

¹⁸ Respectively ed. by C. de Boor, *Theophanis chronographia*, Leipzig 1883, trans. C. Mango and R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, Oxford 1997, and Nikephoros Patriarch of Constantinople. *Short History*, ed. and trans. C. Mango (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 13), Washington, DC, 1990.

based on earlier sources, which petered out in the early sixth century (halting in 518). The two parts, composed respectively soon after 610 and in the middle or late 640s, covered recent politics and foreign relations, at times in considerable detail and towards the end with a distinct bias. It is the second of these continuations which concerns us. As well as providing all or almost all of the material paraphrased by Nicephorus, it was the source of the metropolitan information included in the chronicle composed by John of Nikiu in Egypt, probably in the third quarter of the seventh century, and it supplied Theophanes with one or two items on Roman domestic politics (a point contested by Cyril Mango).

What I had failed to realise was this: *the second continuation of John of Antioch was one of Theophanes' two principal sources for his account of Arab operations in Palestine and Syria (the other being Theophilus of Edessa)*. This is plain when the two texts are compared, first that of Nicephorus, second that of Theophanes with sentences derived from Theophilus of Edessa are printed in italics.¹⁹ Roman generals are marked.

(1) After a short lapse of time the Saracens overran the region round Antioch. Straightaway Herakleios, together with his wife Martina and his son Herakleios, went forth to eastern parts. When he arrived there, he became incensed at **his brother Theodore**, for it was rumoured in some quarters that the latter was railing at the emperor on account of Martina and saying that 'His sin is continually before him.' So he dispatched him to Byzantium . . . And he appointed commander of the eastern (forces) **Theodore surnamed Trithyrios**, the imperial treasurer. Now **Sergios kata Niketan** died in the following manner. The Saracens, having flayed a camel, enclosed him in the hide and sewed it up. As the skin hardened, the man who was left inside also withered and so perished in a painful manner. The charge against him was that he had persuaded Herakleios not to allow the Saracens to trade from the Roman country and send out of the Roman State the 30 lbs. of gold which they normally received by way of commercial gain; and for this reason, they began to lay waste the Roman land. On this account (Herakleios) ordered **Theodore** not to join battle with the Saracens; but **his subordinate commander** did not act according to the emperor's wishes because he had rebellion in mind and (the men) were induced to fight so as to overcome the enemy unexpectedly: they believed that victory would be on the side of the insurgents against the emperor. And so he joined battle with the Saracens at a place called Gabitha (al-Jābiya). But they, having set ambuscades beforehand and skirmished with a few men, advanced on the Romans. The ambushed men fell suddenly on the latter and, having surrounded them, slew many soldiers and officers. (Nicephorus, c.20).

(2) Now some of the neighbouring Arabs were receiving small payments from the emperors for guarding the approaches to the desert. At that time **a certain eunuch** arrived to distribute the

¹⁹ Several of Theophanes' passages attributed by Hoyland, *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle* (as footnote 12), 91–103 to Theophilus are more likely to have come from the second continuation of John of Antioch: (1) p. 335, l. 23–336, l. 3 - refusal of customary payments to client Arabs (paralleled in Nicephorus); (2) 336, l. 15–16 - conquest of al-Ḥira and territory of Gaza; (3) 337, l. 3–7, 12 – appointment of new Roman generals, defeat of Arabs near Emesa and pursuit to Damascus; (4) 338, l. 3–4 – proclamation of Baanes (paralleled in Nicephorus); (5) 337, l. 23–338, l. 3, 338, l. 4–12 - battle of Yarmūk, preceding operations, aftermath.

wages of the soldiers, and when the Arabs came to receive their wages according to custom, the **eunuch** drove them away, saying, 'The emperor can barely pay his soldiers their wages, much less these dogs.' Distressed by this, the Arabs went over to their fellow-tribesmen, and it was they that led them to the rich country of Gaza, which is the gateway to the desert in the direction of Mount Sinai (AM 6123, 631–632).

*In this year Aboubacharos sent four generals who were conducted, as I said earlier, by the Arabs and so came and took Hera [probably the Lakhm capital, al-Ḥira] and the whole territory of Gaza. At length, **Sergius** arrived with some difficulty with a few soldiers from Caesarea in Palestine. He gave battle and was the first to be killed along with his soldiers, who were 300. Taking many captives and much booty, the Arabs returned home after their brilliant victory* (AM 6124, 632–633).

*In this year Aboubacharos died after being emir two and a half years, and Oumaros succeeded to the power. He (sent an expedition against Arabia [i.e. the Roman province]) and took the city of Bostra as well as other cities. And they advanced as far as Gabitha [al-Jābiya]. **Theodore, the brother of the emperor Herakleios**, engaged them, but was defeated and came to the emperor at Edessa. The emperor appointed another commander called **Baanes** and sent **Theodore the sakellarios** at the head of a Roman army against the Arabs. When he came to Emesa, he met a multitude of Saracens whom he slew together with their emir, and drove the rest as far as Damascus; and he encamped there by the river Bardanesios. As for Herakleios, he abandoned Syria in despair and taking the Holy Cross from Jerusalem, proceeded to Constantinople. He diverted **Baanes** and **Theodore the sakellarios** from Damascus to Emesa at the head of an army of 40,000, and they pursued the Arabs from Emesa to Damascus* (AM 6125, 633–634).

In this year the Saracens – an enormous multitude of them – (setting out from) Arabia, made an expedition to the region of Damascus. When **Baanes** had learnt of this, he sent a message to the **imperial sakellarios**, asking the latter to come with his army to his help, seeing that the Arabs were very numerous. So the **sakellarios** joined **Baanes** and, setting forth from Emesa, they met the Arabs. Battle was given and, on the first day, which was Tuesday, the 23rd of the month Loos [July], the men of the **sakellarios** were defeated. Now the soldiers of **Baanes** rebelled and proclaimed **Baanes** emperor, while they abjured Herakleios. Then the men of the **sakellarios** withdrew, and the Saracens, seizing this opportunity, joined battle. And as a south wind was blowing in the direction of the Romans, they could not face the enemy on account of the dust and were defeated. *Casting themselves into the narrows of the Hiermouchthas (Yarmūk), they all perished, the army of both generals numbering 40,000. Having won this brilliant victory, the Saracens came to Damascus and captured it as well as the country of Phoenicia, and they settled there . . .* (AM 6126, 634–635)

(Theophanes, ed. de Boor as footnote 18, p. 335–338, trans. Mango and Scott, 466–470)

All the Roman generals who fought the Arabs – Sergius, Heraclius' brother Theodore, the **sakellarios** Theodore and Baanes – feature in the same order in both sources, although Theophanes mentions the first two in passages derived from Theophilus of Edessa rather than from the second continuation of John of Antioch. An earlier incident which roused Arab animosity – the withholding of the customary payments to Roman clients – is described in both texts, with Nicephorus naming the eunuch involved as Sergius and implying that he was the general killed in the first battle. Nicephorus reproduces his name in full (*Sergius kata Niketan*) and gives the **sakellarios**'

surname (Trithyrios). The campaign culminates in a great battle, variously located at al-Jābiya, west of the Yarmūk (Nicephorus) and near (probably east) of the Yarmūk ravine (Theophanes, here drawing on Theophilus of Edessa). The separation of the two armies of Baanes and the *sakellarios*, after the former's revolt and proclamation as emperor, is an important contributing factor to the Arab victory. Given the proximity between the time of writing and the Levant campaign (separated by a mere ten years of so), we should provisionally accept the second continuation's account and its chronology, in the sense of the order in which events are described. We do not know what dates, if any, were put on individual events, since Nicephorus eliminated dates for stylistic reasons and Theophanes may well have spread events arbitrarily across several years in the annalistic format which he adopted.

Reconstruction

We can build up a narrative with a few firm dates, taking the sources I have just discussed in order.

- 1) At the beginning of 634, two Arab columns marched north, one crossing the Negev from Ayla to attack the rich coastal plain of Palestine from the south, the other taking the direct route through Tabūk to the east side of the Jordan rift valley. The initial role of the inland column may have been to act as a decoy, to draw part of the Roman forces stationed in Palestine east,²⁰ while the main blow was struck in the south, the objective being to advance north as far as the basalt uplands of the Balqā' immediately to the south of the fertile Ḥawrān plain. Both Roman forces were defeated, the general in the east, Heraclius' brother, Theodore, surviving and subsequently dismissed, the general in the west (named Sergius according to Theophanes) being killed, probably tortured to death after capture (Nicephorus). The initial breakthrough into the interior of Palestine was achieved by the western column, after a battle fought twelve miles inland from Gaza on Friday 4th February 634.²¹
- 2) By Christmas 634, Arab bands were roaming over Palestine, so that the feast of the Nativity that year (Christmas fell on a Sunday) when Sophronius, recently

²⁰ Ps.-Sebeos (as footnote 16), p. 135, l. 25–29, trans. Thomson, 96–97: 'They [the Arabs] reached Erabovt' of Moab in the territory of Ruben, for the Greek army had camped in Arabia. Falling on them unexpectedly, they put them to the sword, and put to flight T'eodos the brother of the emperor Heraclius. Then they returned and camped in Arabia.'

²¹ *Chron.* 724 (as footnote 12), p. 147, l. 25–148, l. 3, trans. Palmer, 18–19: 'AG 945 [633–4], indiction VII: On Friday, 4 February, at the ninth hour, there was a battle between the Romans and the Arabs of Muhammad in Palestine twelve miles east of Gaza. The Romans fled, leaving behind the patrikios the son of YRDN, whom the Arabs killed. Some 4,000 poor village people of Palestine were killed there, Christians, Jews and Samaritans. The Arabs ravaged the whole region.'

made patriarch of Jerusalem, preached a moving sermon, could not be celebrated as usual at Bethlehem.²² Fear of Arab marauders kept him and his congregation inside the walls of Jerusalem, causing frustration which is likened to that of Adam barred from Paradise by the flaming sword, and Moses who merely looked upon the Holy Land from a high point, and David, who likewise was prevented from going to Bethlehem. It seems then that the Arabs were impressing their power on Palestine through their raiding forays but had not yet set about taking control of the cities. It is unlikely, though, that the cities would have been able to hold out for many more months. Note the word used by Sophronius of the Arab presence – *hypostema*. This means a firm presence, with unpleasant connotations (it can be used of excrement).

- 3) The main Arab field army now pushed north across the *harras* (lava fields) of the Leja, stretching from the Golan Heights to the Jebel Druze, and invaded Syria. Here a new, larger Roman force, comprising two armies under the *sakellarios* Theodore Trithyrios and Baanes (Armenian, probably in command of Armenian troops), was waiting for them, and succeeded in driving them back when they reached Emesa.²³ The Romans then advanced to the region of Damascus where they camped and probably spent several months toward the end of 635 and in early 636.
- 4) In 636, an enlarged Arab army appeared which the two Roman commanders marched to intercept east of the river Yarmūk. According to one of the derivatives of Theophilus of Edessa, the two armies then faced each other for several days before joining battle.²⁴ Accounts of the battle differ, the various historians picking

22 Sophronius, *Homily on the Nativity* (as footnote 11), p. 506, 514: 'Because of our limitless sins and terrible trespasses we became unworthy of seeing those sites [in Bethlehem]. We were prevented from going there. We are compelled against our will to stay at home [in Jerusalem], not because we are held by physical bonds but gripped by fear of the Saracens . . . We have a desire and thirst like David [for the water of life welling up in Bethlehem] . . . but we are prevented from feasting our soul and eyes on the mere sight by fear of the Saracens. For the *hypostema* of impious Saracens has taken blessed Bethlehem, as other tribes did then, and refuses to allow us passage there, but threatens death and destruction, if we were to leave this holy city and were to dare to approach our longed for, most sacred Bethlehem.'

23 (a) Nicephorus (as footnote 18), c.20, l. 9–11, 21–23, trans. Mango, 69: 'And he appointed commander of the eastern forces Theodore surnamed Trithyrios, the imperial treasurer [*sakellarios*] . . . On this account [the gruesome death of Sergius] (Heraclius) ordered Theodore not to join battle with the Saracens; but his subordinate commander did not act according to the emperor's wishes . . . ' (b) Theophanes, p. 337, l. 3–7, 12, trans. Mango and Scott, 468: 'The emperor appointed another commander called Baanes and sent Theodore the *sakellarios* at the head of a Roman army against the Arabs. When he came to Emesa, he met a multitude of Saracens whom he slew together with their emir . . . and they pursued the Arabs from Emesa to Damascus.' (c) BL colophon (as footnote 15), trans. Palmer, 3, l. 14–18.

24 *Chronicle to the year 1234*, ed. J.-B. Chabot, *Chronicon ad annum Christi 1234 pertinens*, vol 1 (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 81, Scriptores Syri 36), p. 250, l. 22–25, trans. Hoyland, *Theophilus of Edessa* (as footnote 8), 103.

up different details. It is the rashness of the *sakellarios* Theodore which is held responsible in the *History of Khosrov*: he leads his men into a trap and they then have difficulty escaping because of the sand into which they sink.²⁵ Theophanes describes two engagements, fought separately by the two armies. The first, dated to the 23rd of July, only involved the Sakellarios' troops. Despite their defeat, they went on to join those of Baanes, but then withdrew after Baanes announced his rebellion. The decisive victory of the Arabs dated 20th August in the colophon to BL Add. 14,461,²⁶ was over Baanes' army. It is not the sandy surface, but sand blown into Roman eyes by a strong south wind which leads to the Roman defeat.²⁷ Theophanes adds the graphic information (taken from Theophilus of Edessa) about Yarmūk ravines into which the fleeing Roman troops fell.²⁸ Nicephorus alludes to Baanes' rebellion and agrees with the *History of Khosrov* that the Romans fell into ambushes laid by the Arabs.²⁹

- 5) After the battle, with no prospect of relief by a Roman field army, the whole of Palestine, including Jerusalem, submitted to the Arabs, after the victorious army crossed the Jordan and took up a position near Jericho, so not far from Jerusalem.³⁰ The only cities which could contemplate resistance were those like Gaza and Caesarea on the coast, which could be resupplied by sea. The army then prob-

25 Ps.-Sebeos (as footnote 16), p. 136, l. 9–28, trans. Thomson, 97: 'He [Heraclius] began to collect troops, about 70,000, appointed a general over them one of his trusted eunuchs, and ordered them to go to Arabia. He commanded them not to fight with them, to look to their defence until he should have gathered other troops to send to their assistance. But when they reached the Jordan and crossed into Arabia, they left their camps on the riverbank and went on foot to attack their army. The latter posted part of their force in ambush on either side and arranged the multitude of their tents around their camp. Bringing up the herds of camels, they tethered them around the camp and their tents, and bound their feet with cords. This was the fortification of their camp. The others, though wearied from their march, were able at certain places to penetrate the fortification of the camp and began to slaughter them. Unexpectedly, those lying in ambush rose up from their places and attacked them. Fear of the Lord fell on the Greek army, and they turned in flight before them. But they could not flee, because of the density of the sand, since their feet sank in up to their shins; and there was great distress from the heat of the sun, and the enemy's sword pursued them. So all the generals fell and were slain. The number of the fallen was more than 2,000. A few of them escaped and fled to a place of refuge.'

26 BL colophon (as footnote 15), trans. Palmer, 3–4, l. 20–23.

27 Theophanes (as footnote 18), p. 337, l. 23–338, l. 12 (trans. Mango and Scott, 469–470) - see above.

28 Theophanes, 338.8–9 (trans. Mango and Scott, 470: 'Casting themselves into the narrows of the river Hiermouthas, they all perished . . .'); Agapius (trans. Hoyland, as footnote 8, 101: 'the Arabs killed so many Romans that they formed a bridge that one could walk on'); Michael the Syrian (trans. Hoyland, 102: 'a multitude of them drowned in the river Yarmūk.'). *Chron. 1234* (as footnote 24), p. 250, l. 29–251, l. 4 (trans. Hoyland, 103: 'many thousands . . . fell from a steep cliff and were crushed to death').

29 Nicephorus (as footnote 18), c.20, l. 21–31 (trans. Mango, 69, 71) – see above.

30 Ps.-Sebeos (as footnote 16), p. 136, l. 29–35 (trans. Thomson, 97–98): 'They (the Ismaelites) crossed the Jordan and camped at Jericho. Then dread of them fell on all the inhabitants of the land, and they all submitted to them. That night the people of Jerusalem took in flight the Lord's Cross and all the

ably marches north unopposed across the Leja and took control of the whole of Syria. The campaign in the Roman Levant had been brought to a victorious conclusion and the Arabs were able to turn their attention to Sasanian Mesopotamia, probably early in 636.³¹

Early Islamic historical traditions

Some nuggets of authentic material – that is material paralleled in the early non-Muslim sources – can now be picked up from within the traditions transmitted by extant Arab histories. Thus, for example, three of Roman generals who fought the Arabs in the Levant are named in the assemblage of traditions chosen by al-Ṭabarī to constitute his account of the battle of Yarmūk: Bahan (presumably Baanes) brings reinforcements before what appears to be the first of two engagements;³² the emperor's brother (later named Theodore) who, in reality, had been dismissed by this stage, seems to be standing in for Baanes in the second engagement and is killed;³³ his fellow-general is correctly identified as Theodore (he is captured).³⁴ Like Theophilus of Edessa, al-Ṭabarī includes a tradition reporting that large numbers of the defeated Romans fell into a ravine.³⁵ Given that this incident is a central feature in the version of the battle given by al-Azdi and associated histories (for which see below), we should probably infer that Theophilus picked up the report from an Arab rather than a Syrian source.

There is no independent evidence to corroborate al-Ṭabarī's detailed description of the disposition of the cavalry squadrons and their commanders before the battle or the anecdote which he reproduced about Jurjān (George, evidently a senior Roman officer) who came over to the Arab side.³⁶ The same is true of the detailed narratives of the battle transmitted by the cluster of sources such as al-Azdi, Ibn A'tham al-Kūfi and ps.al-Wāqidi. However, their accounts of strategic movements before the battle

vessels of the churches of God. Setting sail on the sea in ships, they brought them to the palace of Constantinople. Then, having requested an oath from them, they submitted to them.'

31 *Chron.* 724 (as footnote 12), p. 148, l. 4–9 (trans. Palmer, 19): 'AG 947 [635–6], indiction IX: The Arabs invaded the whole of Syria and went down to Persia and conquered it; the Arabs climbed the mountain of Mardin and killed many monks there in (the monasteries of) Qedar and Bnotho. There died the blessed man Simon, doorkeeper of Qedar, brother of Thomas the priest.'

32 Ed. M.J. de Goeje, *Annales quos scripsit Abu Djafar Mohammed Ibn Djarir at-Tabari*, Part 1, vol. 4, Leiden 1890, 2091, trans. K. Y. Blankinship, *The Challenge to the Empires* (The History of al-Tabari 11), Albany, NY, 1993, 88.

33 de Goeje, *Annales* (as footnote 32), p. 2102, l. 16, 2103, l. 11, 2104, l. 5, 2107, l. 11–12, trans., 103, 104, 107.

34 de Goeje, *Annales* (as footnote 32), p. 2104, l. 5, trans., 104.

35 de Goeje, *Annales* (as footnote 32), p. 2099, l. 10–15, trans., 98.

36 de Goeje, *Annales* (as footnote 32), p. 2092, l. 14–2095, l. 4, 2097, l. 4–2099, l. 2, trans., 89–94, 95–97.

do tally roughly with the reconstruction presented above – a victorious Arab drive north to Emesa, a Roman counter-offensive which pushes them back beyond Damascus – and the description of the battle has something in common with what can be extracted from the independent sources, namely a Roman attack which penetrates into the Arab camp and a successful Arab counterthrust.³⁷ But there has been a fair amount of narratological reshaping, to give the battle something of the symmetry of a dance, and considerable embellishment (for example, on the role of women in the Arab camp who urged on their men and helped swing the battle in favour of the Arabs). As for the Yarmūk gorges, they do, of course, exist. So, there is nothing improbable in the Arab tradition that they cut off the retreat of some or all of the Roman troops and that many fell to their death – although there may have been much exaggeration of the death-toll.

Al-Balādhurī's main notice about the battle is shorn of anecdote. He confines himself to emphasising the size of the Roman army (without naming its generals) and the ferocity of the battle. He reproduced a *topos* about the chaining together of Roman soldiers to prevent their flight (it also features in one of the traditions gathered by al-Ṭabarī), and has Arab women fight, rather than simply exhort. His account looks like a succinct summary of received traditions, to which he adds notes about the presence in the Roman army of large numbers of Armenian troops and of the commitment of the Ghassān to the Roman cause – both uncorroborated but plausible pieces of information, the Armenians presumably serving under Baanes (Armenian Vahan).³⁸

The main focus of interest, though, for all these writers is Khālīd b. al-Walīd, who brought reinforcements from Mesopotamia and joined the main army in the strategic zone of the Jebel Druze and the Ḥawrān before the battle.³⁹ Much space is devoted to the story of his hazardous march across the desert. He takes overall command of Arab forces on the eve of the battle. Again, there is no corroboration from non-Arab, non-Muslim sources, but there is nothing implausible in the rushing of reinforcements from the north-eastern desert when they were certainly needed in the west. Their numbers cannot have been large, but the strategic significance of their arrival, if arrive they did, should not be underestimated.

All in all, though, as Fred Donner showed many years ago, later Arab historians had great difficulty in devising coherent strategic narratives about the conquest of Palestine and Syria and came up with several different schemes. There is no reason to suspect wanton disregard of the truth. They were, after all, writing about some of the most spectacular achievements of the Muslim community very soon after Muḥam-

³⁷ These sources were discussed at the Tübingen conference by M. Schönleber, 'The Narration of Events Preceding the Battle' and J. Scheiner, 'Narrating the Battle Movement'.

³⁸ Al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb futūḥ al-buldān*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, *Liber expugnationis regionum*, Leiden 1866, p. 135, l. 1–136, l. 5, trans. P. K. Hitti, *The Origins of the Islamic State*, 2 vols, New York 1916–24, vol. 1, 207–208.

³⁹ Donner, *Conquests* (as footnote 1), 119–127.

mad's death. But they had to work from the variegated traditions which reached them. They included a fair amount of authentic information, along with embellishments and mutations introduced in the course of transmission. But why, one must ask, the confusion about strategy and chronology? What has gone wrong? Why is it that early Islamic traditions can present a recognisable and historically cogent narrative about operations in Persian Mesopotamia, incidentally acknowledging that a serious reverse was suffered, but make little sense of operations in the Roman Levant?

While it is true that the main features of the Islamic past, in particular the sequence of Arab conquests and the main episodes in the life of the Prophet before and after the *hijra*, were normally captured and arranged in the correct chronological order in Arab sources, there were a few matters on which there was deliberate tampering. The circumstances of the negotiations between the Muslim emigrants and the Meccans at Ḥudaybiyya in 628 and the terms of the agreement reached have been mangled in the Prophet's biography, known as *sira*. It was imperative to reinterpret the great concession given by the Prophet – acceptance of the principal pagan shrine of Arabia and its associated cults into the new, austere, ultra-monotheistic religion – as the achievement of a long-term aim of his, and to give the Ka'ba a respectable biblical past, as a shrine founded by Abraham.⁴⁰ It was no less important to rewrite the history of the first civil war (656–661), glossing over the scale of the fighting and bloodshed required to impose the authority of the Umayyads on the Caliphate. So, the spotlight remains fixed on 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (r. 656–661), whose reputation is burnished. His assassination is shifted from 658 to 661, so as to provide, in the death of a charismatic leader, an alternative, more acceptable explanation for the collapse of resistance to Mu'āwiya, son of Abū Sufyān, leader of Meccan resistance to Muḥammad up to 630.⁴¹

A similar historiographical intervention, less planned but no less distorting, is, in my view, responsible for the confusion generated about the Levant campaign. Once again there was some tampering with time. Instead of ending with the submission of Palestine, including Jerusalem, in 636 after the battle of Yarmūk, the taking of the holy city and the holy places was pushed forward to 638, and the intervening period was filled with a long siege and operations to take firm control of southern Palestine as well as northern Syria.⁴² Later historians could be excused for being puzzled, faced (1) with traditions which placed an Arab victory at Ajnadayn, located some twenty-five kilometres *west-south-west* of Jerusalem (*i.e.* in southern Palestine), *before* the battle of Yarmūk,⁴³ and (2) with a consensus among the traditions which centred the operations of 634–636 on the strategic zone of the Balqā' and Ḥawrān and the adjoining region of southern Syria.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses* (as footnote 2), 408–414.

⁴¹ Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses* (as footnote 2), 481–483.

⁴² Donner, *Conquests* (as footnote 1), 148–153.

⁴³ Donner, *Conquests* (as footnote 1), 129–130, 141.

⁴⁴ Donner, *Conquests* (as footnote 1), 128–142.

The introduction of a long siege of Jerusalem and the deferment of its fall by two years were products of a rewriting of history, traceable back probably to news releases issued in 638 on the occasion of the Caliph 'Umar's visit. This was patently the climactic moment of the Levant campaign, when the leader of the nascent Muslim community was received by the Christian patriarch of Jerusalem, the aged Sophronius. It marked the definitive conquest of the holy land (and much else). It was natural for the writer or writers of an official, public notice about the episode, to glide over the immediately preceding period of relative calm and to silhouette the visit against a background of the fighting which had occurred two years earlier. The Caliph was, indeed, receiving the *formal* surrender of the holy city and the holy places from its Christian leader. It was then all too easy for later transmitters of traditions to conflate this formal surrender with the city's actual capitulation two years earlier and to credit it all to 'Umar, with a siege introduced to explain this gap.

Such, at any rate, is the best explanation that I can put forward for this distortion of history. It was not as less serious as the rewriting of history after Ḥudaybiyya or the first civil war. For the Caliph did travel north to preside in person over what was in effect a ceremonial celebration of victory, in which he entered Jerusalem clad in the everyday garb of a beduin and took the first step in the appropriation of the Temple Mount for Islam.⁴⁵ The site for this low-key triumphal celebration (the victory of course was Allah's) had to be Jerusalem, the holy city of both Jews and Christians whose holy books had been superseded by the Qur'ān. But the victory which was being celebrated was not just that over Roman forces in the Levant but over the large Persian army which had been mobilised to drive the Arabs out of Mesopotamia in 637. The decisive victory won at Qādisiyya, on the edge of the desert, not far from al-Ḥīra, on 6th January 638, left Sasanian Mesopotamia at the mercy of the new hegemonic power.⁴⁶ It thus sealed the Arab conquest of the Fertile Crescent, running from the Mediterranean coast of Palestine to the head of the Persian Gulf. The practical purpose of 'Umar's journey north later that year (to make arrangements for the permanent occupation of the Levant and Mesopotamia)⁴⁷ was overshadowed by its propaganda purpose, the public demonstration of the power of the true universal religion.

It is no wonder then that it pulled the narrative of the preceding humdrum military events out of shape.

⁴⁵ H. Busse, 'Omar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb in Jerusalem, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 5 (1984), 73–119, and 'Omar's Image as the Conqueror of Jerusalem, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 8 (1986), 149–168.

⁴⁶ Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses* (as footnote 2), 467–468; Hoyland, *God's Path* (as footnote 1), 51–52.

⁴⁷ Donner, *Conquests* (as footnote 1), 151–152.



Part III: **Discourses**

Wolfram Brandes

Das sog. *Constans-Vaticinium* und seine Datierung. Eschatologische Vorstellungen in der ersten Hälfte des 7. Jahrhunderts?

Vielleicht kennt der/die Leser/Leserin das Dilemma, das sich bei der Arbeit an diesem Artikel bald einstellen sollte.¹ Man plant einen Text, hat eine Idee und ist eigentlich froh, dass eben die Abfassung dieses Textes einen zwingt, die Idee auszuarbeiten und schärfer zu formulieren. So ging es mir mit dem im Titel genannten *Constans-Vaticinium*, eine Weissagung, bezogen auf den im mittelalterlichen Denken (im griechischen Osten, wie auch, und da besonders, im lateinischen Westen) so wichtigen Endzeitkaiser (Last Roman Emperor). Etwas überraschend für mich war dann der Umstand, dass man (Shoemaker) diesen kurzen (lateinischen!) Text mit den Vorstellungen und Konzepten des Propheten Muḥammad in eine sehr enge Verbindung brachte und ihm gar eine Kenntnis und Rezeption des Konzepts des Endzeitkaisers (Last Roman Emperor) unterstellte. Dies ist – das sei schon an dieser Stelle mit Nachdruck gesagt – natürlich Unsinn und offenbart methodische Defizite (bad scholarship), die sehr bedenklich stimmen!

Ursprünglich zielte diese Artikel darauf, die Datierung des sog. *Constans-Vaticiniums* ins 7. Jahrhundert, bezogen auf Konstans II. (641–668²), die im Jahre 2011 Gian Luca Potestà im Millennium-Jahrbuch³ vortrug (ich hatte damals lange mit ihm darüber diskutiert) zu bekräftigen und durch neue Überlegungen zu untermauern. Und doch kam es anders. Inzwischen hat dieser kleine Text eine unerwartete Renaissance erfahren und zwar in einem Forschungsfeld, von dem man das (als Byzantinist) nicht erwartet hätte. Noch ohne auf die gleich zu erwähnende Involvierung des *Constans-Vaticiniums* in die Debatte um den Glauben des Propheten Muḥammad eingehen zu können, ging Lutz

1 Ich danke Christopher Bonura, Lutz Greisiger und Hartmut Leppin für Hinweise und Kritik. Nota bene: Dieser Aufsatz entstand in der vor-Corona-Zeit und konnte nur geringfügig aktualisiert werden.

2 Die von J. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis. Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century*, Oxford 2010, 489 vorgetragene Umdatierung des Todesjahres Konstans ins Jahr 669 halte ich nicht für schlüssig. Siehe M. Jankowiak, *The First Arab Siege of Constantinople*, *Travaux et Mémoires* 17 (2013), 237–320, hier bes. 256 mit Anm. 76 und 305–309.

3 G.L. Potestà, *The Vaticinium of Constans. Genesis and Original Purposes of the Legend of the Last World Emperor*, *Millennium* 8 (2011), 271–289; seitdem erschien das wichtige Buch G.L. Potestà, *L'ultimo messia. Profezia e sovranità nel Medioevo*, Bologna 2014; siehe auch G.L. Potestà/M. Rizzi, *L'anticristo, II: Il figlio della perdizione*. Testi dal IV al XII secolo, Milano 2012 – hier bes. 360–381 (Text der *Tiburtinischen Sibylle* nebst einer italienischen Übersetzung) sowie 605–616 (kommentierende Anmerkungen).

Greisiger, der Hannes Möhring⁴ nicht folgte, ausführlich in die Datierungsfrage ein. Er nahm die Entstehung einer Vorstellung von einem endzeitlichen „Heils-Herrscher“ vor dem 7. Jahrhundert an. Diese sollte dann einer Überarbeitung/Aktualisierung nach 629 oder 630 (der Rückführung des Heiligen Kreuzes durch Herakleios⁵ nach seinem Sieg über die sassanidischen Perser) mit einer pro-imperialen Absicht auf Herakleios bezogen worden sei.⁶ Diese Vorstellung habe sich dann bis 692 (*Pseudo-Methodios*) entwickelt.

Möhring meinte, dass „sich fast alle Angaben des *Constans-Vaticinium* mühelos mit der politisch-religiösen Situation des römischen Reiches im 4. Jahrhundert vereinbaren“ lassen.⁷ Ich habe nicht vor, diese m. E. nicht stimmige (aber von vielen Gelehrten übernommene) Ansicht detailliert zu widerlegen. Ein Blick in die relevante Literatur zur Geschichte der Kaiser Constantius und seines Enkels Constans (oft als der erste gezählt)⁸ zeigt, wie schwierig (wenn nicht unmöglich) eine derartige Zuordnung ist. Und schon ein Blick in die „Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire“ zeigt, wie wenig über Constans (I.) überhaupt bekannt ist. Eine derartig unwichtige Person zum Namenspatron des *Vaticiniums* machen zu wollen, ist nicht überzeugend und findet in der aktuellen Forschung zur Geschichte des 4. Jahrhunderts keinerlei Rechtfertigung.⁹ Dieser Umstand war ja auch eine Ursache für den Versuch von Gian Luca Po-

4 H. Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit. Entstehung, Wandel und Wirkung einer tausendjährigen Weissagung* (Mittelalter-Forschungen 3), Stuttgart 2000, bes. 32–49.

5 Siehe auch unten bei Anm. 241–245. Für das Jahr 630 plädierten (unter anderen) C. Mango, *Deux études sur Byzance et la Perse Sassanide, Travaux et Mémoires* 9 (1985), 91–118, hier 112 f. und bes. B. Flusin, *Saint Anastase le Perse et l'histoire de la Palestine au début du VII^e siècle*, II, Paris 1992, 293–306; eine umfassende Revision der Datierung nahm C. Zuckerman, *Heraclius and the Return of the Holy Cross, Travaux et Mémoires* 17 (2013), 197–218 (mit der älteren Literatur) vor und plädierte nun (mit guten Gründen) für 629. In der Forschung scheint das Jahr 630 sich durchgesetzt zu haben – siehe z. B. N. Viermann, *Herakleios, der schwitzende Kaiser* (Millennium-Studien 89), Berlin/Boston 2021, 265; Th. Raum, *Szenen eines Überlebenskampfes. Akteure und Handlungsspielräume im Imperium Romanum 610–630* (Roma aeterna 9), Stuttgart 2021, 199. Für den vorliegenden Aufsatz ist diese Frage ohne Bedeutung.

6 L. Greisiger, *Messias · Endkaiser · Antichrist. Politische Apokalyptik unter Juden und Christen des Nahen Ostens am Vorabend der arabischen Eroberung* (Orientalia Biblica et Christiana 21), Wiesbaden 2014, 175–183; ihm folgten z. B. Z. Pogossian/S. La Porta, *Apocalyptic Texts, Transmission of Topoi, and Their Multi-Lingual Background: The Prophecies of Agat'on and Agat'angel on the End of the World*, in: L. DiTommaso/M. Henze/W. Adler (Hg.), *The Embroidered Bible. Studies in Biblical Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha in Honour of Michael E. Stone* (Studia in Vetus Testamenta Pseudepigrapha, 26), Leiden/Boston 2018, 824–851, hier 830–831.

7 Möhring, *Weltkaiser der Endzeit* (wie Anm. 4), 42.

8 Zu beiden siehe A.H.M. Jones/J.R. Martindale/J. Morris, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, I: A.D. 260–395, Cambridge 1971, 220 (s.n. Fl. Iul. Constans 3; Augustus 337–350) sowie 226 (s.n. Fl. Iul. Constantius 4; Augustus 337–361).

9 Ausführlich zu den Zeitumständen, den relevanten Quellen und der Forschungsliteratur M. Moser, *Emperor and Senators in the Reign of Constantius II. Maintaining Imperial Rule between Rome and Constantinople in the Fourth Century AD*, Cambridge 2018. Ich danke Frau Dr. Moser-Gerber für freund-

testà, Konstans II. im 7. Jahrhundert als den ursprünglichen Namensgeber für das *Constans-Vaticinium* zu identifizieren, was auf jeden Fall sinnvoller war, als einen Ursprung im 4. Jahrhundert zu verorten – auch wenn Hannes Möhring, Lutz Greisiger und andere Ernst Sackur¹⁰ folgend, dies annehmen. Es sei bereits an dieser Stelle angemerkt, dass die Bedeutung Kaiser Herakleios und seine Rückführung des Heiligen Kreuzes im Jahre 629 (oder doch 630?) in der Fachliteratur stark übertrieben wird. Man sah, in durchaus verengender Weise hier einen Endzeitkaiser *avant la lettre*. Man projizierte das erst am Ende des 7. Jahrhunderts entstehende Konzept vom römischen Endzeitkaiser (durch *Pseudo-Methodios*) zurück, die zentrale Bedeutung des Heiligen Kreuzes und seine Rückbringung stark überhöhend bzw. übertreibend. Einen konkreten Anhalt in (wirklich) zeitgenössischen Quellen lässt sich allerdings dafür nicht finden!¹¹

Nachdem Fred Donner 2010 in seinem sehr lesenswerten Buch „Muhammad and the Believers. At the Origin of Islam“¹² – das bis heute intensiv diskutiert wird – meinte, bezogen auf die ersten Anhänger Muḥammads, dass „they may have also believed that the *amir al-mu'minin*, as leader of this new community dedicated to the realization of God's word, would fulfill the role of that expected 'last emperor' who would on the last day, had earthly power over to God,“¹³ wurde dies in der Forschung aufgegriffen. An anderer Stelle (gleich am Beginn des Buches) ist die Rede davon, dass der byzantinische Kaiser sich bereits im 6. Jahrhundert als „the Last Emperor“ gesehen habe.¹⁴ Auch Stephen Shoemaker schlug in diese Kerbe¹⁵ und versuchte inzwischen durch eine Reihe von Publikationen¹⁶ die Position zu erhärten, dass Muḥam-

liche Auskünfte. Relevante Texte liegen jetzt in Übersetzung vor: R. Flower (Hg.), *Imperial Invektives against Constantius II*. Translated with Introduction and Commentary (Translated Texts for Historians, 67), Liverpool 2016.

10 E. Sackur, *Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen. Pseudomethodius, Adso und die tiburtinische Sibylle*, Halle 1898, 163.

11 Siehe auch unten bei Anm. 242–245.

12 F. M. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers. At the Origins of Islam*, Cambridge (Mass.)/London, 2010.

13 Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers* (wie Anm. 12), 144.

14 Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers* (wie Anm. 12), 16; siehe auch a.a.O. 125, wo angedeutet wird, dass der Kalif 'Abd al-Mālik sich ebenfalls als „that final, just ruler“ gesehen habe.

15 Und widmete Muḥammad als einem „eschatologischen Propheten“ ein ganzes Kapitel seiner Monographie über den Propheten: St. J. Shoemaker, *The Death of a Prophet. The End of Muhammad's Life and the Beginning of Islam*, Philadelphia 2012, 118–196 (Chapter 3: The Beginning of Islam and the End of Days: Muhammad as Eschatological Prophet).

16 St. J. Shoemaker, „The Reign of God Has Come“: Eschatology and Empire in Late Antiquity and Early Islam, *Arabica* 61 (2014), 514–558; St. J. Shoemaker, The Tiburtine Sibyl, the Last Emperor, and the Early Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition, in: T. Burke (Hg.), *Forbidden Texts on the Western Frontier. The Christian Apocrypha from North American Perspectives* (Proceedings from the 2013 New York University Apocrypha Symposium), Eugene 2015, 218–244; T. Burke, The Tiburtine Sibyl. A New Translation and Introduction, in: T. Burke/B. Landau (Hg.), *New Testament Apocrypha. More Noncanonical*

mad durch christliche eschatologische Vorstellungen beeinflusst wurde bzw. dass diese „can at least explain the emergence of Muhammad’s eschatological movement“.¹⁷ Als Byzantinist, der sich seit langen Jahren sowohl mit der Geschichte des 7. und 8. Jahrhunderts als auch mit eschatologischen Vorstellungen in Byzanz beschäftigt,¹⁸ kann ich es nur begrüßen, wenn auch die Forschung zum Propheten Muḥammad und dem frühen Islam die eschatologische Dimension der Begründung dieser neuen Weltreligion beachtet. Auch die Entstehung des Christentums, das muss an dieser Stelle nicht ausdrücklich ausgeführt werden, hatte eine eschatologische Dimension, die bekanntlich zu den Problemen führte, die die sog. „Parousieverzögerung“ generierte.¹⁹ Insofern ist die anhaltende Debatte unter Spezialisten des frühen Islam nur zu begrüßen.

Stephen Shoemaker griff die Idee (eher eine beiläufige Bemerkung) Donners auf²⁰ und entwickelte sie weiter. Die in diesem Zusammenhang an Shoemaker geäußerte Kritik ist sehr bedenkenswert,²¹ ist aber nicht Gegenstand dieses Artikels. Dass die Geschichte des frühen Islam eine bemerkenswerte eschatologische Dimension aufwies, war lange bekannt.²² Allerdings kann ich mich des Eindrucks nicht erwehren,

Scriptures, I, Grand Rapids (Mi.) 2016, 510–525; T. Burke, Muḥammad and the Qur’ān, in: S.F. Johnson (Hg.), *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, Oxford/New York 2012, 1078–1108.

17 Shoemaker, *Death of a Prophet* (wie Anm. 15), 170.

18 Siehe (u. a.) W. Brandes, Die apokalyptische Literatur, in: F. Winkelmann/W. Brandes (Hg.), *Quellen zur Geschichte des frühen Byzanz (4.-9. Jahrhundert). Bestand und Probleme*, (Berliner Byzantinistische Arbeiten 55), Berlin 1990, 305–322, 367–370; W. Brandes/F. Schmieder (Hg.), *Endzeiten. Eschatologie in den monotheistischen Weltreligionen* (Millennium-Studien 16), Berlin/New York 2008; W. Brandes/F. Schmieder (Hg.), *Antichrist – Konstruktion von Feindbildern*, Berlin 2010; W. Brandes/F. Schmieder/R. Voß (Hg.), *Peoples of the Apocalypse. Eschatological Beliefs and Political Scenarios* (Millennium-Studien 63), Berlin/Boston 2016; W. Brandes, *Die Städte Kleinasiens im 7. und 8. Jahrhundert* (Berliner Byzantinistische Arbeiten, 56), Berlin 1989; W. Brandes, *Finanzverwaltung in Krisenzeiten. Untersuchungen zur byzantinischen Administration im 6.-9. Jahrhundert* (Forschungen zur byzantinischen Rechtsgeschichte 25), Frankfurt am Main 2002; W. Brandes, Das Schweigen des Liber Pontificalis. Die „Enteignung“ der päpstlichen Patrimonien Siziliens und Unteritaliens in den 50er Jahren des 8. Jahrhunderts, *Fontes Minores* 12 (2014), 97–204 u. a. m.

19 Siehe (u. a.) E. Gräßer, *Das Problem der Parousieverzögerung in den synoptischen Evangelien und in der Apostelgeschichte* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und der Kunde der älteren Kirche 22), Berlin/New York 31977.

20 Siehe etwa Shoemaker, „The Reign of God Has Come“ (wie Anm. 16), hier 527.

21 Siehe z. B. N. Sinai, The Eschatological Kerygma of the Early Qur’an, in: H. Amirav/E. Grypeou/G. Stroumsa (Hg.), *Apocalypticism and Eschatology in Late Antiquity. Encounters in the Abrahamic Religions, 6th – 8th Centuries*, Leuven/Paris/Bristol 2017, 219–266, bes. Anm. 75 auf S. 237; siehe besonders den in Anm. 24 zitierten Artikel von Av. Cameron.

22 D. Cook, *Studies in Muslim apocalyptic* (Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam 21), Princeton (NJ) 2002; siehe z. B. noch D. Cook, Muslim Apocalyptic and Jihād, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 20 (1996), 66–104 und An Early Muslim Daniel Apocalypse, *Arabica* 40 (2002), 55–96; W. Madelung, Apocalyptic Prophecies in the Umayyad Age, *Journal of Semitic Studies* 31 (1986), 141–185; M. Cook, An Early Islamic Apocalyptic Chronicle, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 52 (1993),

dass einige Gelehrte – insbesondere Shoemaker – zu viel des Guten in dieser Hinsicht tun. Niemand zweifelt daran, dass die Spätantike und insbesondere das 7. Jahrhundert (und in späteren Jahrhunderten ebenso²³) im Nahen Osten in bestimmten Regionen und zu bestimmten Zeiten eine mehr oder weniger ausgeprägte Endzeiterwartung kannte. Aber: Es gab genauso Regionen und Zeiten, in denen es eben nicht so war! Es ist gefährlich und in wissenschaftlicher (methodischer) Hinsicht verhängnisvoll, gerät man in die Falle der Übertreibung, die tendenziell einen Trend zu einer monokausalen Betrachtung aufweist.²⁴ Die (wenigen) Texte, die in diesem Zusammenhang immer wieder zitiert werden, stehen einer nach tausenden Druckseiten zählenden Masse an sonstigen Quellen der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters gegenüber. Das soll zwar nicht heißen, dass die wenigen Seiten/Zeilen, die auf ein eschatologisches Denken weisen, irrelevant sind,²⁵ doch schon dieser (quantitative) Umstand muss zur Vorsicht gemahnen. Es ist bequem (und ich habe dies in der Vergangenheit auch getan²⁶), ausgehend von einzelnen Quellenstellen, eine weite Verbreitung endzeitlicher Vor-

25–29; F. Donner, *From Believers to Muslims: Confessional Identity in the Early Islamic Community*, *Al-Abhath* 51/52 (2002/2003), 9–53; J.-P. Filiu, *Apocalypse in Islam*, Berkeley 2012; bereits M. Canart in seinem grundlegenden Aufsatz *Les expéditions des Arabes contre Constantinople dans l'histoire et dans la légende*, *Journal Asiatique* 208 (1926), 61–121 (auch in: J.-P. Filiu, *Byzance et les musulmans du Proche Orient*, London 1973, Nr. I) betonte die große Rolle eschatologischer/apokalyptischer Vorstellungen der frühen Muslime. Breit ausgeführt wird dieses Thema bei Shoemaker, *Death of a Prophet* (wie Anm. 15), *passim*.

23 W. Brandes, *Die Belagerung Konstantinopels 717/718 als apokalyptisches Ereignis. Zu einer Interpolation im griechischen Text der Pseudo-Methodios-Apokalypse*, in: K. Belke/E. Kislinger/A. Külzer/M. A. Stassinopoulou (Hg.), *Byzantina Mediterranea. Festschrift für Johannes Koder zum 65. Geburtstag*, Wien 2007, 65–91; W. Brandes, *Liudprand von Cremona (Legatio cap. 39–41) und eine bisher unbeachtete west-östliche Korrespondenz über die Bedeutung des Jahres 1000 a.D.*, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 93 (2000), 435–463; W. Brandes, *Der Fall Konstantinopels als apokalyptisches Ereignis*, in: S. Kolditz/R. C. Müller (Hg.), *Geschehenes und Geschriebenes. Studien zu Ehren von Günther S. Henrich und Klaus-Peter Matschke*, Leipzig 2005, 453–470; W. Brandes, *Kaiserprophetien und Hochverrat. Apokalyptische Schriften und Kaiservaticinien als Medium antikaiserlicher Propaganda*, in: Brandes/Schmieder (Hg.), *Endzeiten* (wie Anm. 18), 157–200; W. Brandes, *Konstantinopels Fall im Jahre 1204 und „apokalyptische“ Prophetien*, in: W. J. van Bakkum/J. W. Drijvers/A.C. Klugkist (Hg.), *Syriac Polemics. Studies in Honour of Gerrit Jan Reinink* (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 170), Leuven/Paris/Dudley 2007, 239–259.

24 In diesem Sinne siehe W. Brandes, *Predictions of the End of the World in 500, 1000 and 1492 AD*, in: H. Ch. Lehner (Hg.), *End(s) of Time(s)* (Prognostication in History 6), Leiden/Boston 2021, 32–63; berechnete Zweifel formulierte Av. Cameron, *Late Antique Apocalyptic: a Context for the Qur'an?* in: Amirav/Grypeou/Stroumsa (Hg.), *Apocalypticism and Eschatology in Late Antiquity* (wie Anm. 21), 1–19. Die Erwiderung von St. J. Shoemaker, *The Apocalypse of Empire. Imperial Eschatology in Late Antiquity and Early Islam*, Philadelphia 2018, 65–66, ist irrelevant.

25 Dass dies nicht so ist, habe ich in diversen Arbeiten (siehe Anm. 18) zu zeigen versucht.

26 W. Brandes, *Anastasios ó ὁκόπος. Endzeiterwartung und Kaiserkritik in Byzanz um 500 n. Chr.*, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 90 (1997), 24–63, hier u. a. 62–63.

stellungen in Permanenz anzunehmen. Auch Stephen Shoemaker bemüht das Bild vom Eisberg und seiner allein sichtbaren Spitze.²⁷

Will man beim Propheten Muḥammad und seinen „Gläubigen“ der ersten Generation eine primär eschatologische Motivation entdecken und diese in ein umfassendes Erklärungsmodell für die unglaublichen Erfolge (religiöse, aber eben auch militärische und politische) integrieren, ist man gezwungen, insbesondere das Konzept vom „Last Roman Emperor“²⁸ bzw. seine Entstehung in die Zeit vor Muḥammad zu datieren. Und konsequenterweise versuchte man nun (namentlich Stephen Shoemaker²⁹) das *Constans-Vaticinium*³⁰ der *Tiburtinischen Sibylle*³¹ ins Spiel zu bringen, gleichsam als Blaupause für Muḥammad und sein weltgeschichtliches (Selbst-)Verständnis (bzw. das seiner frühen Anhänger). Das setzte natürlich voraus, dass dieses vor Muḥammad bekannt gewesen sein musste.

Dem wurde heftig und mit schlagenden Argumenten widersprochen (insbesondere von Christopher Bonura³²). All das führte mich dazu, gewisse Argumente neu zu durchdenken. Inzwischen hat Shoemaker seine bereits mehrfach vorgetragenen Auffassungen³³ in einer Monographie erneut präsentiert.³⁴

27 Shoemaker, *Apocalypse of Empire* (wie Anm. 24), 76 („tip of the iceberg“).

28 In den letzten Jahren war der „Last Roman Emperor“ mehrfach Gegenstand von Untersuchungen. Sie seien hier genannt, auch wenn sie wenig zur in diesem Artikel behandelten Thematik beitragen. Siehe u. a. P. Guran, Genesis and Function of the „Last Emperor“ Myth in Byzantine Eschatology, *Byzantinistica* 8 (2006), 273–303 (bes. 285, 287–287, 296–298); B. Leadbetter, A Byzantine Narrative of the Future and the Antecedents of the Last World Emperor, in: J. Burke et al. (Hg.) *Byzantine Narrative. Papers in Honour of Roger Scott* (Byzantina Australiensia 16), Melbourne 2006, 383–392 (bes. 369, 377–380); P. Ubierna, Recherches sur l’apocalyptique syriaque et byzantine au VII^e siècle: la place de l’Empire romain dans une histoire du salut, *Bulletin du centre d’études médiévales d’Auxerre* 2 (2008), 2–28 (bes. 10–11); A. Kraft, The Last Roman Emperor *Topos* in the Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition, *Byzantion* 82 (2012), 213–257.

29 Siehe die bibliographischen Angaben eben in Anm. 15 und 16.

30 Eine Bezeichnung, die wohl zuerst Möhring, *Weltkaiser der Endzeit* (wie Anm. 4), 39 gebrauchte; siehe auch Potestà, *The Vaticinium of Constans* (wie Anm. 3).

31 *Sib. Tib.*, ed. Sackur (wie Anm. 10), 177–187, das *Constans-Vaticinium* auf S. 184,19–185,23; diese Textfassung auch in *Sibyllinische Weissagungen* (Sammlung Tusculum), Darmstadt 1998, 325/327.

32 Ch. Bonura, When did the Legend of the Last Emperor Originate? A New Look at the Textual Relationship between *The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* and the *Tiburtine Sibyl*, *Viator* 47 (2016), 47–100; so schon Ch. Bonura, The Man and the Myth: Did Heraclius Know the Legend of the Last Roman Emperor? *Studia Patristica* 62 (2013), 503–513.

33 Wobei auffällt, dass er umfangreich seine bereits mehrfach (!), z. T. wortwörtlich (stets über viele Seiten hinweg), geäußerten Argumente und Mutmaßungen wiederholt.

34 Shoemaker, *Apocalypse of Empire* (wie Anm. 24). Es ist hier nicht der Ort zu einer ausführlichen Auseinandersetzung mit diesem Buch. Zumindest was den spätantiken/byzantinischen Teil angeht, halte ich es für fehlgeleitet und in die Irre gehend. Inzwischen hat A. Kraft in einer Rezension dieses Buches in *Plekos* 21 (2019), 531–547 eine umfassende Auseinandersetzung vorgelegt (der man nur beipflichten kann). Siehe auch die Kritik von Ch. Bonura, *Church History* 89 (2020), 429–431 in seiner Rezension.

Aber zunächst eine kurze Einführung in die Problematik: In – soweit ich sehe – fast 130 lateinischen Handschriften zwischen 1047 und dem 15. Jahrhundert überliefert, ist dieser lateinische Text in mindestens vier Rezensionen die sog. *Tiburtinische Sibylle* verfügbar.

1898 edierte Ernst Sackur diesen Text, der der Rezension II entspricht (es fehlt eine modernen Ansprüchen genügende Edition, das darf nicht vergessen werden).³⁵ Und nachdem 1949 Silvio G. Mercati in einer vatikanischen Handschrift eine griechische Vorlage entdeckte, edierte diese Paul Alexander unter dem Namen *Orakel von Baalbek*. Er verfügte über drei griechische Handschriften, die älteste (Athos, Karakallou 1527) stammt aus dem 12. Jahrhundert. Inzwischen fand sich eine vierte – in einer juristischen Sammelhandschrift aus dem 15. Jahrhundert (früher Kosenitz, heute im Dujčev-Zentrum in Sofija).³⁶ Der hier überlieferte Text fügt sich nahtlos in Alexanders Stemma ein, ändert also nichts. Erwähnenswert sind die karschunischen, eine armenische, eine (christlich-)arabische und eine äthiopische Übersetzung, die aber keine Spur des sog. *Constans-Vaticiniums* enthalten, dafür aber deutliche Hinweise auf die islamische Expansion.³⁷ Auch die slavische Übersetzung einer nicht original erhaltenen griechischen Vorlage, die nicht identisch mit dem von Paul Alexander edierten *Orakel von Baalbek* war, kennt keinen Endzeitkaiser.³⁸

Bernard McGinn,³⁹ der Altmeister der apokalyptischen Forschung, auch Paul Alexander selbst (in einer handschriftlichen Notiz zu seinem unvollendeten Manuskript

³⁵ Siehe gleich bei Anm. 42–45 zu den erhaltenen bzw. erschlossenen Rezensionen des Textes. Auch Shoemaker, *The Tiburtine Sibyl* (wie Anm. 16), 222, betont dies.

³⁶ P.J. Alexander, *The Oracle of Baalbek. The Tiburtine Sibyl in Greek Dress* (Dumbarton Oaks Studies 10), Washington DC 1967; zu dieser Handschrift siehe L. Burgmann/M.Th. Fögen/D. Simon/A. Schminck, *Repertorium der Handschriften des byzantinischen Rechts*, Teil I: *Die Handschriften des weltlichen Rechts* (Forschungen zur byzantinischen Rechtsgeschichte 20), Frankfurt 1995, Nr. 283 (S. 323), Pos. 73; A. Kraft, *An Inventory of Medieval Greek Apocalyptic Sources (c. 500–1500 AD): Naming and Dating*, Editions and Manuscripts, *Millennium* 15 (2018), 69–143, hier 78–79. Die Handschrift fügt sich problemlos in Alexanders Stemma ein und bietet leider keine bemerkenswerten Lesarten. Zu den orientalischen Übersetzungen siehe J. Schleifer, *Die Erzählung der Sibylle. Ein Apokryph nach den karschunischen, arabischen und äthiopischen Handschriften zu London, Oxford, Paris und Rom* (Denkschriften der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Klasse, 53), Wien 1910, hier 78–79; S. Brock, *A Syriac Collection of Prophecies of the Pagan Philosophers*, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 14 (1983), 203–246 (hier bes. 220–221 und 231–232); R.Y. Ebied/M.J.L. Young, *An Unrecorded Arabic Version of a Sibylline Prophecy*, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 43 (1977), 279–309; R.Y. Ebied/M.J.L. Young, *A Newly-Discovered Version of the Arabic Sibylline Prophecy*, *Oriens Christianus* 60 (1976), 83–94; *CAVT* 275; *CANT* 320.

³⁷ Siehe auch unten bei Anm. 65.

³⁸ J. Petkov, *Altoslavische Eschatologie. Texte und Studien zur apokalyptischen Literatur in kirchenslavischer Überlieferung* (Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter 59), Tübingen 2016, 166–168, 338–343 (deutsche Übersetzung).

³⁹ B. McGinn, *Visions of the End. Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages*, New York 1979 (zit. nach der paperback edition von 1998), 44 (mit Anm. 7 auf S. 294–295); B. McGinn, *Teste David cum Sibylla: The Significance of the Sibylline Tradition in the Middle Ages*, in: J. Kirshner/S. F. Wemple (Hg.),

seiner wichtigen Monographie „Byzantine apocalyptic tradition“⁴⁰ und zuletzt in aller Ausführlichkeit Christopher Bonura⁴¹ haben gezeigt, dass das *Constans-Vaticinium* in der um das so gefährliche Jahr 1000⁴² herum entstandene *Tiburtinischen Sibylle* (deshalb in der Forschung oft auch als *Ottonische Sibylle* – wegen Otto III. – bezeichnet bzw. als die [verlorene] Rezension I⁴³) inkorporiert wurde. Als Rezension III sieht man die sog. *Cumäische Sibylle* an, die bereits deutlich mit Material aus der *Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodios* durchsetzt ist.⁴⁴ Hinzu kommt die spätere sog. *Newsberry Sibyl*, die vor einigen Jahren Bernard McGinn edierte und ausführlich untersuchte.⁴⁵

Women of the Medieval World. Essays in Honour of John H. Mundy, Oxford 1985, 7–35, hier 27; B. McGinn, *Oracular Transformations: The Sibylla Tiburtina in the Middle Ages*, in: *Sibille e linguaggi oraculari. Mito, Storia, Tradizione*, a cura di I. Chirassi Colombo e di T. Seppilli (Ichnia 3), Pisa/Roma 1998, 603–644, hier bes. 613–614 mit Anm. 26 und 633–634.

⁴⁰ P.J. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*. Ed. with an introd. by D. deF. Abrahamse Berkeley 1985, 162 Anm. 44; P.J. Alexander, *Byzantium and the Migration of Literary Works and Motifs: The Legend of the Last Roman Emperor*, *Medievalia et Humanistica* N.S. 2 (1971), 47–68, bes. 66–67 (Anm. 35); siehe schon J. Wortley, *The Literature of Catastrophe*, *Byzantine Studies/Études byzantines* 4 (1977), 1–17, hier 16–17; weitere Hinweise auf diese Meinung bei Bonura, *When did the Legend of the Emperor Originate?* (wie Anm. 32), 71 Anm. 102; Kraft, *The Last Roman Emperor Topos* (wie Anm. 28); F.J. Martinez, *The King of Rûm and the King of Ethiopia in Medieval Apocalyptic Texts from Egypt*, in: *Coptic Studies. Acts of the Third International Congress of Coptic Studies* (Warsaw, 20–25 August, 1984), ed. by W. Godlewski, Warschau 1990, 247–259, hier 256.

⁴¹ Bonura, *When did the Legend of the Emperor Originate?* (wie Anm. 32), 71.

⁴² Dazu siehe aus dem byzantinistischen Bereich Brandes, *Liudprand* (wie Anm. 23); P. Magdalino, *The Year 1000 in Byzantium*, in: *Byzantium in the Year 1000*, ed. by P. Magdalino (The Medieval Mediterranean 45), Leiden/Boston 2003, 233–270; P. Magdalino, *Une prophétie inédite des environs de l'an 965 attribué à Léon le Philosophe* (Ms. Karakallou 14, f. 253^r–254^r), *Travaux et Mémoires* 14 (2002), 391–402; I. Ševčenko, *Unpublished Byzantine Texts on the End of the World about the Year 1000 AD*, *Travaux et Mémoires* 14 (2002), 561–578; für den lateinischen Westen siehe J. Fried, *Endzeiterwartung um die Jahrtausendwende*, *Deutsches Archiv* 45 (1989), 381–473; J.T. Palmer, *The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, Cambridge 2014; R. Landes, *The Fear of an Apocalyptic Year 1000: Augustinian Historiography, Medieval and Modern*, *Speculum* 75 (2000), 97–145.

⁴³ Bonura, *When did the Legend of the Emperor Originate?* (wie Anm. 32), 61–62, 65–67; A. Holdenried, *The Sibyl and Her Scribes. Manuscripts and Interpretation of the Latin Sibylla Tiburtina c. 1050–1500*, Aldershot 2006, 4; A. Holdenried, *Many Hands without Design: The Evolution of a Medieval Prophetic Text*, *The Medieval Journal* 4.1 (2014), 23–42, bes. 24; A. Holdenried, *Christian Moral Decline, A New Context for the Sibylla Tiburtina* (Ms Escorial & I.3), in: Brandes/Schmieder/Voß (Hg.), *Peoples of the Apocalypse* (wie Anm. 18), 321–336; M.M. Tischler, *From Rome to Ripoll, Rijo, and beyond: The Iberian Transmission of the Latin Tiburtine Sibyl and Oliba of Ripoll and Vic's Europe-wide Network of Knowledge Transfer and Learning*, *Early Medieval Europe* 30 (2022), 358–576, bes. 561–563; McGinn, *Oracular Transformations* (wie Anm. 39), bes. 612–614; Potestà, *The Vaticinium of Constans* (wie Anm. 3), 273 f.; siehe schon *Oracle of Baalbek* (Alexander) (wie Anm. 36), 48–65, 136–143.

⁴⁴ C. Erdmann, *Endkaiserglaube und Kreuzzugsgedanke im 11. Jahrhundert*, *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 51 (1932), 384–414, Text: 388–390.

⁴⁵ McGinn, *Oracular Transformations* (wie Anm. 39), Text: 636–644.

Der ursprüngliche griechische Text, die von Paul Alexander postulierte *Theodosianische Sibylle* aus dem Ende des 4. Jahrhunderts (die selbst nicht erhalten ist), wurde kurz nach dem Jahre 500 an die geänderten Zeitereignisse bzw. an die auf ca. 500 a.D. bezogene Endzeiterwartung angepasst (*Orakel von Baalbek*⁴⁶).⁴⁷ Unbekannt ist der Zeitpunkt, an dem eine lateinische Übersetzung der *Theodosianischen Sibylle* angefertigt wurde. Auch wenn Stephen Shoemaker behauptet, dass „a broad scholarly consensus“ darüber bestünde, diese (verlorene) lateinische Übersetzung ins ausgehende 4. Jahrhundert zu datieren,⁴⁸ ist dies alles andere als sicher, ja vielleicht sogar unwahrscheinlich – auf jeden Fall nicht beweisbar! Jedenfalls stellt diese die Grundlage für die *Sibylla Tiburtina* dar. Und entsprechend ist es unklar und wohl sogar unwahrscheinlich, dass das *Constans-Vaticinium* bereits in dieser frühen (griechischen) Textfassung enthalten war. Ich halte dies für unmöglich. Gegen eine frühe Übersetzung spricht schon der Umstand, dass es nicht die geringste Spur (in lateinischen wie in griechischen Texten) vor dem ausgehenden 10. Jahrhundert (die *Ottomische Sibylle* bzw. dann der von Ernst Sackur edierte Text = Rezension II) gibt.⁴⁹ Der Umstand, dass das *Orakel von Baalbek* keine Figur des endzeitlichen Herrschers kennt, spricht m. E. sehr deutlich gegen eine „Entstehung“ bereits in der Spätantike. Und alle Verrenkungen, die Stephen Shoemaker anstellte, um dies dennoch zu „beweisen“, scheitern bereits an dieser Tatsache.⁵⁰

Einen Fortschritt im Verständnis der Entstehung der *Sibylla Tiburtina* stellt die vor einigen Jahren entwickelte „sedimentation theory“ von Anke Holdenried dar.⁵¹ Danach finden sich – neben dem *Constans-Vaticinium* – mehrere Interpolationen (etwa die bekannten Listen westlicher Herrscher) in diesem Text, die zu unterschiedlichen Zeiten interpoliert wurden. Schon Ernst Sackur hatte in seiner Edition von 1898 einige dieser Interpolationen durch Kursivdruck deutlich gemacht.⁵² Das *Constans-Vaticinium* jedoch scheint er zum ursprünglichen Textbestand gerechnet zu haben.

46 *Oracle of Baalbek* (Alexander) (wie Anm. 36); CAVT 275; CPG 1353.

47 Brandes, Anastasios ὁ δίκτοπος (wie Anm. 26), 24–63.

48 Shoemaker, *The Tiburtine Sibyl. A New Translation* (wie Anm. 16), 512 mit Anm. 12; Wissenschaft ist keine plebiszitäre Veranstaltung und die Anzahl von Gelehrten, die eine bestimmte Meinung vertraten, ist keineswegs ein Kriterium für deren Richtigkeit! McGinn, *Oracular Transformations* (wie Anm. 39), 613 z. B., nahm ca. 700 als Zeit der Übersetzung an. Siehe auch N. Brocca, *La traduzione della Sibilla Tiburtina e l'acrostico della Sibilla Eritrea tra Oriente ed Occidente, tardoantichità e medioevo*, in: St. Gioanni/B. Grévin (Hg.), *L'antiquité tardive dans les collections médiévales. Textes et représentations, VI^e–XIV^e siècle* (Collection de l'École française de Rome 405), Rom 2008, 225–260, hier 227.

49 Vgl. zu dieser Frage etwa McGinn, *Oracular Transformations* (wie Anm. 39), 613; Holdenried, *Many Hands* (wie Anm. 43), 25–26.

50 So auch (sehr berechtigt) Holdenried, *Many Hands* (wie Anm. 43), 26: es sei auch auf die oben in Anm. 38 angeführte slavische Übersetzung verwiesen, die eben keinen Endzeitkaiser kennt!

51 Holdenried, *Many Hands* (wie Anm. 43).

52 *Sib. Tib.*, ed. Sackur (wie Anm. 10), 177 (Prolog); 181,16–182, 23; 183,2,5–10; 184,8–18.

Kurz gesagt, die Entwicklung des Textes (Einfügungen von „Sedimenten“ nach Anke Holdenried) und das Auftauchen des *Constans-Vaticiniums* am Ende sprechen für eine späte Entstehung desselben (9./10. Jahrhundert). Außerdem muss betont werden, dass das *Constans-Vaticinium* keine wirkliche Parallele in den relevanten (und bekannten) griechischen Texten hat, die nicht von *Pseudo-Methodios* abhängen bzw. von dessen Apokalypse beeinflusst sind. Wie Christopher Bonura zutreffend schrieb, war die Weissagung vom Endzeitkaiser in der *Sibylla Tiburtina* „a pastiche composed of various prophecies cobbled together at various time“, sich auf Anke Holdenried berufend.⁵³

Das *Orakel von Baalbek* wurde also kurz nach dem Jahre 500 a.D. in die heute bekannte (und durch 4 Handschriften bezeugte) Form des Orakels (basierend auf der von Paul Alexander erschlossenen *Theodosianischen Sibylle*) gebracht, was im Kontext der um 500 im oströmischen Reich virulenten Endzeiterwartung zu sehen ist. Hier wird berichtet, wie die Sibylle nach Rom kam. 100 *kritai* hatten alle ein und denselben Traum, den die Sibylle deuten sollte. Der Traum beinhaltete neun Sonnen, die von der Seherin als neun Generationen (im Sinne von Erdzeitaltern) gedeutet wurden. Nun deutet die Sibylle jede dieser Generationen, beginnend mit einem goldenen Zeitalter, nach dem sich alles immer mehr verschlechterte. In der 4. Generationen wird in einer längeren Digression Christi Geburt geschildert. Es folgen nun diverse Kaiser und Kriege (Konstantin, Valens, Valentinian, Julian, Markian, Theodosios). Hier – so Paul Alexander – endete wohl die verlorene Urversion. Der Continuator, der um 500 schrieb, setzte mit der 7. fort, wobei Wiederholungen auftreten. Der Vandalenkönig Geiserich wird thematisiert. Die letzte, 8., berichtet von den Kaisern Leon I., Basiliskos und schließlich Anastasios. Dieser ist der letzte identifizierbare Kaiser und nun drehen die *vaticinia ex eventu* in wirkliche Prophetie. Es folgen der Antichrist, Henoch und Elias, die beiden Zeugen (nach Offb. 11.11),⁵⁴ und schließlich erfolgt die zweite Parousie Christi und das Letzte Gericht. Es muss angemerkt werden, dass sich die hier interessierenden Elemente – die apokalyptischen Völker Gog und Magog, der Endzeitkaiser und dessen Abdankung in Jerusalem – nicht finden. Die Annahme einer lateinischen Fassung des Ur-Orakels (aus der Zeit Theodosios' I.), die alle diese Elemente enthalten haben soll, ist reine Willkür. Dass es aus den sechs Jahrhunderten bis ca. 1000 nicht den Hauch einer Spur eines solchen Textes gibt, spricht schon allein für sich. In den fünf Jahrhunderten zwischen der Zeit des Anastasios und der Ottos III. soll diese griechische Schrift ins Lateinische übersetzt worden sein – eine mehr als kühne Hypothese.

Ich will hier nicht in aller Ausführlichkeit die Argumente von Bernard McGinn, Paul Alexander und nun insbesondere Christopher Bonura wiederholen. Stattdessen

⁵³ Bonura, When did the Legend of the Last Emperor Originate? (wie Anm. 32), 61; Holdenried, Many Hands (wie Anm. 43).

⁵⁴ Siehe zu ihnen unten bei Anm. 259–263.

werde ich einige mir zentral erscheinenden Stelle des *Constans-Vaticiniums* versuchen, ausführlich zu analysieren und eine eventuelle neue (zeitliche) Einordnung zu präsentieren.⁵⁵

Datierungsfragen

Doch bevor das unternommen werden soll, muss noch auf diverse Umdatierungen mehr oder weniger (eher weniger) relevanter Texte durch Stephen Shoemaker eingegangen werden. Das *Constans-Vaticinium* stellt mithin keine Ausnahme in dessen Pseudoargumentation dar. Ziel war zweifellos, zu beweisen, dass zu den Lebzeiten des Propheten Muḥammad eine bereits entwickelte Vorstellung vom Endzeitkaiser existierte, die dann den frühen Islam beeinflusst habe sollte.

In der für ihn typischen Weise datiert Stephen Shoemaker den als 5 Baruch bzw. äthiopische Baruch-Apokalypse (ein Fälaša-Text)⁵⁶ in eine ihm passende Zeit um bzw. unterstellt eine spätantike (auf jeden Fall vor dem Beginn der islamischen Expansion) Entstehungszeit.⁵⁷ Tatsächlich findet sich im zweiten (End-)Teil dieser nur schlecht erforschten Schrift diese Passage: In der äthiopischen (jüdischen) Baruch-Apokalypse lautet die relevante Stelle wie folgt:

Then a righteous man will reign. Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.⁵⁸ Justice shall spring out in his days. He will reign thirty years in the five-hundred-and-forty-eighth cycle. After that the false messiah will come. He will say: ‚I am God,‘ and will perform numerous signs and wonders. He shall cause the sun to rise in the west and the moon toward ‘Ēlām; his right eye will be blended with blood, his right foot will be thin; the nails of his hands will be distorted and those of his hands and feet will be like scythes; his right [hand] will be for extermination and his left [hand] for death.⁵⁹ He will reign seven years. Then God will

⁵⁵ Dazu gleich S. 96–118.

⁵⁶ Siehe die englische Übersetzung bei W. Leslau, *Falasha Anthology* (Yale Judaica Series 6), New Haven 1951, 64–76 (nebst den kommentierenden Anmerkungen auf den S. 165–172); vgl. auch die Bemerkungen zu diesem Text von Leslau a.a.O. 57–64.

⁵⁷ Shoemaker, „The Reign of God Has Come“ (wie Anm. 16), hier 549 mit Anm. 94; Shoemaker, *The Tiburtine Sibyl* (wie Anm. 16), hier 243; Shoemaker, *Apocalypse of Empire* (wie Anm. 24), 85–86; siehe zu den folgenden Ausführungen ist bereits Bonura, *When did the Legend of the Last Emperor Originate?* (wie Anm. 32), hier bes. 72–73 zu vergleichen; siehe auch Bonura, *The Man and the Myth* (wie Anm. 32), 503–513.

⁵⁸ Jes. 11.5.

⁵⁹ Zu den physiognomischen Beschreibungen des Antichrist vgl. W. Bousset, *Der Antichrist in der Überlieferung des Judentums, des neuen Testaments und der alten Kirche. Ein Beitrag zur Auslegung der Apokalypse*, Göttingen 1895 (Nachdruck Hildesheim etc. 1983), 132–134; Brandes, Anastasios (wie Anm. 26), 57–62 (mit der relevanten Literatur); reiches Quellenmaterial dazu in *Die griechische Daniel-Diegeese. Eine altkirchliche Apokalypse*. Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar von K. Berger (Studia post-biblica 27), Leiden 1976, 115–120 (mit der instruktiven Tabelle nach S. 116).

cause the false messiah to cease. The lion will then reign seven years or sixty-seven in the count of the cycles. He will summon a council of priests, monks, believers, and numerous armies. He will say to the Cross:⁶⁰ 'Take away all this,' and the Cross will take it and ascend to Heaven. All of them will weep bitterly and will die; the king will die with them. Michael and Gabriel will come with their armies and will take them into the garden of joy. Then the demon Qolëyon will come with thirty thousand and seventy-seven others and will reign. They will eat rocks like reeds, will swallow fire, and will drink the blood of women in their impurity. They will reign seven years.⁶¹

Diverse Elemente der Beschreibung des Endzeitkaisers liegen hier vor. Stephen Shoemaker beruft sich bei seiner Datierung von 5 Baruch in die Zeit vor Muhammad auf einen Vortrag von Pierluigi Piovanelli aus dem Jahre 2012.⁶² Dieser hat seine Ergebnisse allerdings bisher nicht publiziert (wie man der Bibliographie auf seiner Homepage entnehmen kann), so dass eine Überprüfung nicht möglich ist. Nach Stephen Shoemaker deute die Nichterwähnung des Islam spätestens auf das frühe 7. Jahrhundert. Doch kann man darauf eine so weitgehende Schlussfolgerung aufbauen? Wohl kaum!

Der zweite, eschatologische, Teil ist nach Wolf Leslau eine gekürzte Fassung der äthiopischen Petrus-Apokalypse.⁶³ Robert Beylot⁶⁴ bemerkte weiter Verbindungen zur *Weisheit der Sibylle*.⁶⁵ Er kam nach einem eingehenden Vergleich zu dem Ergebnis, dass es sich um „une simple addition qui peut être datée du XIV^e–XV^e siècle“ handelte, letztlich basierend auf *Pseudo-Methodios*.⁶⁶

Die harmlos erscheinende Bemerkung von Stephen Shoemaker,⁶⁷ dass dieser mehr als periphere Text „equally important“ sei (also so wichtig wie die Apokalypse des *Pseudo-Methodios*, deren tatsächliche Bedeutung für das gesamte Mittelalter und der frühen Neuzeit außer Frage steht) ist – nicht nur in methodischer Hinsicht – derartige falsch, dass der harmlose Historiker, der dies liest, in düstere Gedanken fallen muss.⁶⁸ Immerhin gibt es einen relativ ausführlichen Artikel in der noch nicht sehr alten *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, den Stephen Shoemaker offenbar nicht kennt (?).⁶⁹ Danach entstand dieser Text ursprünglich auf Äthiopisch und ist auch nur in dieser Sprache überliefert. Entsprechend gibt es keinen Text in anderen Sprachen, der ver-

60 Vgl. Bousset, *Antichrist* (wie Anm. 59), 154–159 (Die Zeichen des Menschensohnes).

61 Leslau, *Falasha Anthology* (wie Anm. 56), 75–76.

62 Siehe Shoemaker, *Tiburtine Sibyl* (wie Anm. 16), 243 Anm. 89.

63 Leslau, *Falasha Anthology* (wie Anm. 56), 63.

64 R. Beylot, *Sur deux textes apocalyptiques éthiopiens*, *Semitica* 30 (1980), 89–92.

65 Siehe Schleifer, *Die Erzählung der Sibylle* (wie Anm. 36), 78–79.

66 Beylot, *Sur deux textes* (wie Anm. 64), 92.

67 Shoemaker, *The Tiburtine Sibyl* (wie Anm. 16), hier 243.

68 Immer (nicht nur im hier traktierten Zusammenhang) lohnenswert ist die Lektüre von E. Bernheim, *Lehrbuch der historischen Methode und der Geschichtsphilosophie*, Leipzig 1908, bes. 595–599 und 607–613.

69 W. Witakowski, *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* I (2003), 487–488 (s.v. Baruch, Apocalypse of).

gleichbar ist. Erhalten ist eine christliche und eine Fälaša-Version. Zu einem unbekannten Zeitpunkt von den Fälaša-Juden adaptiert indem die christlichen Elemente entfernt wurden, wurde sie wobei man allerdings das Kreuz und den Namen Konstantins „übersah“.

Publiziert ist bisher allein die Fälaša-Version.⁷⁰ Diese Apokalypse besteht aus zwei ungleichen Teilen. Im ersten Teil wird berichtet, wie Baruch zur Zeit des Falls von Jerusalem in den Himmel entrückt wurde, wo ihm dieser und die Strafen der Hölle gezeigt wurden. Im zweiten (kürzeren) Teil wird die Zukunft beschrieben. Es geht um gute Herrscher, den Antichristen, das Millennium und die Auferstehung. Es gibt Parallelen zu anderen äthiopischen Apokalypsen (Henoch, Esrau⁷¹). Der erste Teil weist enge Parallelen zu einer Marienapokalypse auf, die im 9. Jahrhundert entstand (im 14. Jahrhundert ins Äthiopische aus dem Arabischen übersetzt), die selbst eine überarbeitete Version der *Visio Sancti Pauli* war (und selbst auf einer Petrus-Apokalypse und der Thomas-Apokalypse basiert).

Vielleicht gibt es auch Verbindungen zum *Kebrä Nagast* (*Kəbrä nəgāst*),⁷² der umfangreichen Erzählung vom König Salomo und der Königin von Sheba, mithin vom Ursprunge der äthiopischen Königsdynastie bot.⁷³ Hier spielt u. a. der König Kaleb von Aksum eine besondere Rolle, weshalb Irfan Shahid versuchte diesen Text, der sonst ins 14. Jahrhundert datiert wird, in eine wesentlich frühere Zeit (6./7. Jahrhundert) zu datieren.⁷⁴ Dem wurde mit gut nachvollziehbaren Gründen widersprochen.⁷⁵

Die Zeit der Abfassung ist unbekannt. Einige der Quellen wurden frühestens erst im 13. Jahrhundert ins Äthiopische übersetzt (wohl eher 14.-15. Jahrhundert). Die ältesten Handschriften stammen aus dem 13./14. Jahrhundert.⁷⁶

Bekanntlich entstanden in den Jahren der persischen Herrschaft im Heiligen Land (nach 614) unter den Juden⁷⁷ eine Anzahl apokalyptischer Schriften, die die Hoff-

70 J. Halévy, *Tē ʾēzāa Sanbat (Commandements du sabbat), accompagné de six autres écrits pseudo-épigraphiques admis par les Falachas ou Juifs d'Abyssinie*, Paris 1902, 80–96 (Text) und 195–209 (franz. Übersetzung); danach die Übersetzung von Leslau (wie eben in Anm. 56).

71 Siehe Leslau, *Anthology* (wie Anm. 56), 63.

72 Siehe P. Marrassini, *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* III (2000), 364–368 (s.v. *Kəbrä nəgāst*), mit umfangreicher Bibliographie.

73 Edition (bzw. Übersetzung) des *Kebrä Nagast* (*Kəbrä nəgāst*): C. Bezold, *Kebrä Nagast. Die Herrlichkeit der Könige* (Abhandlungen der Kgl. Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, XXIII, Abh. 1), München 1909; E.A.W. Budge, *The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son Menyelek* (1), London 1922; A. Caquot, *Le Kebrä Nagast et les Révélationes du Pseudo-Méthode*, in: Cl. Lepage (Hg.), *Études éthiopiennes*, I. *Actes de la X^e conférence internationale des études éthiopiennes* (Paris, 24–28 août 1988), Paris 1994, 331–335.

74 I. Shahid, *The Kebrä Nagast in the Light of Recent Research*, *Le Muséon* 89 (1976), 133–178.

75 St. Munro-Hay, *A Sixth Century Kebrä Nagast? Annales d'Ethiopie* 17 (2001), 43–58; Zusammenstellung der Argumente für eine späte Datierung Marrassini (wie in Anm. 72).

76 Siehe die Übersicht bei Bezold, *Kebrä Nagast* (wie Anm. 73), VIII–X.

77 Die intensiv mit den Persern gegen Byzanz kollaboriert hatten. Siehe Greisiger, *Messias* (wie Anm. 6), 32–63; G. Dagron/V. Déroche, *Juifs et chrétiens en Orient byzantin* (Bilans de recherche 5),

nungen des jüdischen Volkes auf Befreiung vom römischen Joch zum Ausdruck brachten. Die messianischen Hoffnungen hatten zu dieser Zeit bereits eine sehr lange Vorgeschichte.⁷⁸ Mit den Ereignissen zu Beginn des 7. Jahrhunderts insbesondere in Jerusalem und dem Heiligen Lande hat sich in den letzten Jahren insbesondere in umfassender Weise Lutz Greisiger befasst. Auf ihn bzw. seine Dissertation sei ausdrücklich verwiesen.⁷⁹ Übersetzungen (nebst nützlichen Einleitungen) der fraglichen Texte (u. a. *Sēfer Zerūbbābel*, *Sēfer Ēliyyāhū*, *ʿOtot Ha-Mašīaḥ*, *Nistarot* des R. Šimʿon b. Yoḥai) veröffentlichte John Reeves.⁸⁰ Stephen Shoemaker⁸¹ legt großen Wert auf diese jüdischen apokalyptischen Schriften. Sie wurden von ihm herangezogen, um ein allgemeines apokalyptisches Szenario zur Zeit des Propheten Muḥammad zu entwer-

Paris 2010, 22–34 (ursprünglich in *Travaux et Mémoires* 11 [1991]); J. Starr, Byzantine Jewry on the Eve of the Arab Conquest (565–638), *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* 15 (1935), 280–293; A. Sharf, Byzantine Jewry in the Seventh Century, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 48 (1955), 103–115; W.J. van Bakkum, Four Kingdoms Will Rule: Echoes of Apocalypticism and Political Reality in Late Antiquity and Medieval Judaism, in: Brandes/Schmieder (Hg.), *Endzeiten* (wie Anm. 18), 101–118, bes. 109–110 mit weiterer Literatur.

⁷⁸ Siehe nur das bei P. Volz, *Die Eschatologie der jüdischen Gemeinde im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter*, Tübingen 1934, V–XI, 134–229 und *passim* präsentierte Material.

⁷⁹ Greisiger, *Messias* (wie Anm. 6), *passim* (stets mit aktueller Bibliographie).

⁸⁰ Zum *Sēfer Zerūbbābel* siehe M. Himmelfarb, *Jewish Messiahs in a Christian Empire. A History of the Book of Zerubbabel*, Cambridge (Masss.)/London 2017; Greisiger, *Messias* (wie Anm. 6), 68–70, 75–77, 86–87, 269–272 und *passim*; I. Lévi, *Le ravissement du Messie à sa naissance et autres essais* (I. Lévi, Textes choisis et présentés par E. Patlagean (Collection de la Revue des études juives 13), Paris 1994, 173–227 (ursprünglich: L'Apocalypse de Zorobabel et le roi de Perse Siroès, *Revue des études juives* 68 [1914] 129–160; 69 [1919] 108–121; 71 [1920], 57–65) ; französ. Übersetzung: 188–204; van Bakkum, *Four Kingdoms* (wie Anm. 77), 109 f.; W. van Bakkum, Jewish Messianic Expectations in the Age of Heraclius, in: G. J. Reinink/B. H. Stolte (Hg.), *The Reign of Heraclius (610–641): Crisis and Confrontation* (Groningen Studies in Cultural Change 2), Leuven etc. 2002, 95–112, hier 104–105; J.C. Reeves, *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic. A Postbiblical Apocalypse Reader*, Leiden/Boston 2006, 40–66; zur Figur des „Armilos“ siehe L. Greisiger, Die Geburt des Armilos und die Geburt des „Sohnes des Verderbens“. Zeugnisse jüdisch-christlicher Auseinandersetzung um die Identifikation des Antichristen im 7. Jahrhundert, in: W. Brandes/F. Schmieder (Hg.), *Antichrist. Konstruktionen von Feindbildern*, Berlin 2010, 15–37; zum *Sēfer Ēliyyāhū* siehe Reeves, *Trajectories* 31–39; M. Avi-Yonah, *Geschichte der Juden im Zeitalter des Talmud in den Tagen von Rom und Byzanz* (Studia Judaica 2), Berlin 1962, 261 f. datiert in die letzten Jahre des Kaisers Phokas († 610); Greisiger, *Messias* (wie Anm. 6), 38, 40 Anm. 152 (um 630 redigiert); zum *ʿOtot Ha-Mašīaḥ* („Zeichen des Messias“) siehe Bonura, When did the Legend of the Last Emperor Originate? (wie Anm. 32), 72 mit Anm. 106; Reeves, *Trajectories* 121–132; R. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others saw it* (Studies in Late Antiquity and early Islam 13), Princeton 1997, 318 datiert ins 11. Jahrhundert; G. Dagron, Introduction historique: Entre histoire et apocalypse, *Travaux et Mémoires* 11 (1991), 17–46, hier 41–42 ins 7./8. Jahrhundert; Greisiger, *Messias* 162; M. Nel, The Signs of the Messiah (ʿOtot Hamashiach) and Jewish Apocalypticism, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2 (2012), 80–96; zum *Nistarot* („Geheimnisse“) des R. Šimʿon b. Yoḥai siehe Reeves, *Trajectories* 76–105; vgl. auch Greisiger, *Messias* 53–63 zur Gestalt des R. Šimʿon b. Yoḥai.

⁸¹ Shoemaker, *Apocalypse of Empire* (wie Anm. 24), 13–24; siehe auch M. Himmelfarb, Revelation and Rabbinization in *Sēfer Zerubbabel* and *Sēfer Eliyahu*, in: Ph. Townsend/M. Vidas (Hg.), *Revelation, Literature, and Community in Late Antiquity*, Tübingen 2011, 218–225.

fen.⁸² Es steht außer Zweifel, dass in den ersten Jahrzehnten des 7. Jahrhunderts, als die genannten (u. a.) apokalyptischen Texte der Juden entstanden, eine Endzeitstimmung unter den Juden im Heiligen Land existierte. Ob von da aus Einflüsse auf Muhammad ausgingen, vermag ich nicht zu beurteilen. Eine genaue Lektüre zeigt jedoch, dass keine wirklich belegbaren Einflüsse auf die christlichen Byzantiner festgestellt werden können. Und von einem christlichen (!) Endzeitkaiser, wie ihn das *Constans-Vaticinium* der *Sibylla Tiburtina* und – vor allem – die *Pseudo-Methodios-Apokalypse* kennt, ist nicht die Rede! Der wissenschaftliche (bzw. wissenschaftsgeschichtliche) Hintergrund für Stephen Shoemakers Versuche, diese jüdischen Texte in seine Vorstellungen vom Alter und der Bedeutung des *Constans-Vaticiniums* einzubauen, stellte eine inzwischen schon „alte“ Debatte in den 70er und 80er Jahren des 20. Jahrhunderts dar. Paul Alexander hatte 1978 die Frage ventiliert,⁸³ ob der bei *Pseudo-Methodios* auftauchende Endzeitkaiser vielleicht auf jüdische Vorstellung vom Messias zurückzuführen ist. Harald Suermann versuchte, dies weiter zu untermauern.⁸⁴ Nachdem jedoch Gerrit Reinink dies (gut begründet und somit erfolgreich) widerlegen konnte,⁸⁵ geht man auf gesicherter Grundlage davon aus, dass es sich um (christliche) syrische Traditionen handelt, die *Pseudo-Methodios* zur Figur des Endzeitkaisers verdichtete.⁸⁶

Auf die Datierung der *Pseudo-Methodios-Apokalypse*, die Stephen Shoemaker ebenfalls früher entstanden sein lässt, werde ich demnächst an anderer Stelle eingehen. Die Zeit vor dem Ende (Herbst) des Jahres 692 (also ca. 691 – 1. Hälfte 692) ist m.E. nicht nur durch Gerrit Reinink bzw. durch die von ihm vorgebrachten Argumente als

⁸² Shoemaker, „The Reign of God Has Come“ (wie Anm. 16), 550–557; Shoemaker, The Tiburtine Sibyl (wie Anm. 16), 243.

⁸³ P. J. Alexander, The Medieval Legend of the Last Roman Emperor and its Messianic Origin, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 41 (1978), 1–15, hier bes. 6 ff.

⁸⁴ H. Suermann, Der byzantinische Endkaiser bei Pseudo-Methodios, *Oriens Christianus* 71 (1987), 140–155.

⁸⁵ Besonders G. Reinink, Die syrischen Wurzeln der mittelalterlichen Legende vom römischen Endkaiser, in: M. Gosman/J. van Os (Hg.), *Non nova, sed nove. Mélanges de civilisation médiévale dédiés à Willem Noomen* (Mediaevalia Groningana 5), Groningen 1984, 195–209; G. Reinink, Pseudo-Methodius und die Legende vom römischen Endkaiser, in: W. Verbeke/D. Verhelst/A. Welkenhuysen (Hg.), *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages* (Mediaevalia Lovaniensia Series I; Studia 15), Leuven 1988, 82–111 (auch in G. Reinink, *Syriac Christianity under Late Sassanian and Early Islamic Rule*, Aldershot 2005, Nr. VIII); in diesem Sinne auch F.J. Martinez, The Apocalyptic Genre in Syriac: The World of Pseudo-Methodius, in: H.J.W. Drijvers/R. Levanant/C. Molenberg/G.J. Reinink (Hg.), *IV Symposium Syriacum 1984. Literary Genres in Syriac Literature* (Orientalia Christiana Analecta 229), Rom 1987, 339–352, hier 340.

⁸⁶ Siehe noch die Einleitung zu *Die syrische Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius*, übersetzt von G.J. Reinink (CSCO 541; Scriptores Syri 221), Louvain 1993, XXIX–XLV; G.J. Reinink, Ps.-Methodius: a Concept of History in Response to the Rise of Islam, in: Av. Cameron/L. Conrad (Hg.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East, I: Problems in the Literary Source Material* (Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam 1), Princeton 1982, 149–187 (auch in G.J. Reinink, *Syriac Christianity* [wie Anm. 85], Nr. IX). Siehe jetzt Chr. Bonura, A Prophecy of Empire. The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius from Late Antique Mesopotamia to the Global Medieval Imagination, Berkeley 2025.

gesichert anzusehen.⁸⁷ Es lassen sich noch weitere Umstände anführen, die genau diese Datierung stützen und die zeigen, dass auf der einen Seite die Herrschaftspropaganda Justinians II. Verbindungen zu *Pseudo-Methodios* aufweist, wie auch die generelle politische Situation dieser Jahre – was Stephen Shoemaker in keiner Weise beachtete – für diese angenommene Entstehungszeit passt.⁸⁸

Es ist hier ebenfalls nicht der Ort, um ausführlich auf Shoemakers Behandlung der *Syrischen Alexanderlegende*⁸⁹ und des sog. *Alexanderliedes*⁹⁰ einzugehen. Er will jedenfalls das *Alexanderlied* auf eine verlorene „Urschrift“ aus dem Beginn des 6. Jahrhunderts zurückführen,⁹¹ was nicht gänzlich falsch ist. Ich hatte vermutet, dass die *Alexanderlegende* auf „Material“ aus noch früherer Zeit basiert.⁹² Allerdings taucht im Text (nach der Übersetzung von Budge) kein „final king“ auf!⁹³ Und dass die syrische *Alexanderlegende* eine wesentliche Grundlage für *Pseudo-Methodios* und seine „Erfindung“ des Endzeitkaisers war, ist lange schon bekannt.⁹⁴ Insofern ist es unerheblich

87 Shoemaker beruft sich auf veraltete Literatur, wo sich die fehlerhafte (zu frühe) Datierung der *Pseudo-Methodios-Apokalypse* findet – siehe z. B. H. Suermann, *Die geschichtstheologische Reaktion auf die einfallenden Muslime in der edessenischen Apokalyptik des 7. Jahrhunderts* (Europäische Hochschulschriften. Reihe XXIII, Theologie, 256), Frankfurt etc. 1985, 159–161.

88 Siehe W. Brandes, *The Marvelous Year 692 - a Hub of Historical Processes*, in: W. Brandes/J. Tanous /H. Reimitz (Hg.), *Legal Pluralism and Social Change in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Studies in Honour of John Haldon* (Recht im ersten Jahrtausend 3; Studien zur europäischen Rechtsgeschichte 3), Frankfurt 2024, 175–228.

89 *A Christian Legend Concerning Alexander*, trad. E.A.W. Budge, *The History of Alexander the Great, being the Syriac Version, edited from five manuscripts of the Pseudo-Callisthenes with an English Translation*, Cambridge 1889 (Nachdruck Amsterdam 1976), 144–158.

90 *Das syrische Alexanderlied. Die drei Rezensionen*, übersetzt von G. J. Reinink (CSCO 455; Scriptores Syri 196), Louvain 1983.

91 Shoemaker, *Apocalypse of Empire* (wie Anm. 24), 82–86.

92 W. Brandes, *Gog, Magog und die Hunnen. Anmerkungen zur eschatologischen „Ethnographie“ der Völkerwanderungszeit*, in: W. Pohl/C. Gantner/R. Payne (Hg.), *Visions of Community in the Post-Roman World. The West, Byzantium, and the Islamic World*, Aldershot 2012, 477–498, hier 487. Der Hinweis von Shoemaker, *Apocalypse of Empire* (wie Anm. 24), 83 auf eine Stelle im „Leben östlicher Heiliger“ des Johannes von Ephesos, geschrieben vor 586 (Todesjahr; vgl. P. Bruns, in: S. Döpp/W. Geerlings [Hg.] *Lexicon der antiken christlichen Literatur*, 3. Aufl., Freiburg/Basel/Wien 2022, 390–391) ist ohne Relevanz. Siehe *John of Ephesus, Live of the Eastern Saints*. Syriac Text Edited and Translated by E.W. Brooks (*Patrologia Orientalis* XVII/1), Paris 1923, 78. Der hier erwähnte Hunneneinfall von 515 ist in diversen Quellen fassbar, wie in meinem eben zitierten Aufsatz nachgelesen werden kann. Mit Gog und Magog hat diese Stelle nichts zu tun!

93 So von Shoemaker, *Apocalypse of Empire* (wie Anm. 24), 84 behauptet. Siehe die *Syrische Alexanderlegende*, hg. Budge (wie Anm. 89), 154.

94 K. Czegledy, *The Syriac Legend Concerning Alexander the Great*, *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 7 (1957), 231–249; G.J. Reinink, *Die Entstehung der syrischen Alexanderlegende als politisch-religiöse Propagandaschrift für Herakleios' Kirchenpolitik*, in: C. Laga/J.A. Munitiz/L. Van Rompay (Hg.), *After Chalcedon. Studies in Theology and Church History, offered to Professor Albert van Roey for his Seventieth Birthday* (*Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 18), Leuven 1985, 263–281 (auch in Reinink *Syriac Christianity* [wie Anm. 85], Nr. III).

für die Suche nach dem tatsächlichen Ursprung des Motivs des Endzeitkaisers (mit allen Eigenheiten, wie bei *Pseudo-Methodios* beschrieben).

Der Text des *Constans-Vaticiniums*

Um die folgenden Ausführungen verständlicher zu machen, sei hier der größte Teil des *Constans-Vaticinium* abgedruckt:⁹⁵

[185,1] *Et tunc surget rex Grecorum, cuius nomen Constans, et ipse erit rex Romanorum et Grecorum. Hic erit statura grandis, aspectus decorus, vultu splendidus atque per singula membrorum liniamenta decenter compositus. Et ipsius regnum C et XII annis terminabitur. [185,5] In illis ergo diebus erunt divitiae multe et terra abundanter dabit fructum, ita ut tritici modium denario uno venundetur, modium vini denario uno, modium olei denario uno.*

Et ipse rex scripturam habebit ante oculos dicentem: "Rex Romanorum omne sibi vindicet regnum christianorum". [185,10] Omnes ergo insulas et civitates paganorum devastabit et universa idolorum templa destruet, et omnes paganos ad baptismum convocabit et per omnia templa crux Iesu Christi erigetur. Tunc namque preveniet Aegyptus et Ethiopia manus eius dare Deo. Qui vero cruce Iesu Christi non adoraverit gladio punietur, et cum completi fuerint centum et viginti anni, Iudei convertentur ad Dominum, et erit ab omnibus sepulcrum eius gloriosum. [185,18] In diebus illis salvabitur Iuda et Israel habitabit confidenter. In illo tempore surget princeps iniquitatis de tribu Dan, qui vocabitur Antichristus. Hic erit filius perditionis et caput superbie, et magister erroris, plenitudo malicie, qui subvertet orbem et faciet prodigia et signa magna per falsas simulationes.

Und dann erhebt sich ein Griechenkönig, der Constans heißt, und er wird König der Römer und Griechen sein. Dieser wird groß sein an Gestalt, herrlich anzuschauen, strahlenden Angesichts und in der Linienführung der einzelnen Gliedmaßen zierlich gebaut. Und seine Herrschaft wird erst in 112 Jahren beendet werden. In jenen Tagen nun wird viel Reichtum herrschen, und die Erde wird im Überfluß Frucht geben, so daß ein Scheffel Weizen um einen Denar verkauft wird, ebenso ein Maß Wein oder Öl um einen Denar.

Und er selbst wird die Schrift vor Augen haben, die da sagt: „Der König der Römer soll für sich das ganze Reich der Christen beanspruchen.“ Er wird also alle Inseln und Städte der Heiden verwüsten und alle Götzentempel zerstören und alle Heiden zur Taufe zusammenrufen, und in allen Tempeln wird das Kreuz Jesu Christi errichtet. Denn dann wird zuvor Ägypten und Äthiopien Gott seine Hand reichen. Wer aber das Kreuz Jesu Christi nicht verehrt, wird mit dem Schwerte büßen, und wenn 120 Jahre sich erfüllt haben, werden sich die Juden zum Herrn bekehren, und sein Grab wird von allen verherrlicht. In jenen Tagen wird Juda gerettet, und Israel wird zuversichtlich wohnen. In jener Zeit erhebt sich der Fürst der Ungerechtigkeit aus dem Stamme Dan, welcher genannt wird der Antichrist. Dieser wird sein der Sohn des Verderbens, das Haupt des Hochmuts, der Lehrer des Irrtums, die Fülle der Bosheit; er wird die

⁹⁵ Text nach *Sib. Tib.*, ed. Sackur (wie Anm. 10), 184,19–185,23; Übersetzung bei Gauger/Kurfeß (wie oben Anm. 31). Eine neue englische Übersetzung jetzt bei Shoemaker, *The Tiburtine Sibyl. A New Translation* (wie Anm. 16), hier 524–525.

(fortgesetzt)

Deludet autem per artem magicam multos, ita ut ignem de celo descendere videatur. [185,24] Et minuuntur anni sicut menses sicut septimana et septimana sicut dies, et dies sicut hore, [et ora velut puncti]. Et exurgent ab aquilone spurcissime gentes, quas Alexander [rex Indus] inclusit, Gog videlicet et Magog. [186,3] Hec [autem] sunt XXII regna, quorum numerus [est] sicut arena maris. Cum autem audierit rex Romanorum, convocato exercitu debellabit eos atque prosternet usque ad internicionem et postea veniet Ierusalem, et ibi deposito capitis diademate et omni habitu regali relinquet regnum christianorum Deo patri et Iesu Christo filio eius. [186,9] Et cum cessaverit imperium Romanum, tunc revalibitur manifeste Antichristus et sedebit in domo Domini in Ierusalem. Regnante eum eo, egridientur dua clarissimi viri Helias et Enoch ad annuntiandum Domini adventum et Antichristus occidet eos, et post dies tres a Domino resuscitabuntur. Tunc erit persecution magna, qualis non fuit antea nec postea subsequetur. [186,15] Adbreuiabit autem dominus dies illos propter electos et occidetur virtute Domini Antichristus a Mikaele arcangelo in monte Oliveti.

Welt stürzen und große Zeichen und Wunder tun durch falschen Schein.

Er wird aber durch seine magische Kunst viele zum besten haben, so daß es scheint, als ob Feuer vom Himmel herabkäme. Und die Jahre werden verkürzt wie die Monate, und Monate wie Wochen, und Wochen wie Tage, und Tage wie Stunden [und Stunden wie Augenblicke], Und es werden sich erheben vom Norden die gräßlichen Völker, die Alexander [König der Inder] einst eingeschlossen hat, nämlich Gog und Magog. Dies sind 22 Königreiche, deren Einwohnerzahl ist wie der Sand am Meer. Wenn aber der Römerkönig dies hört, wird er sein Heer zusammenrufen und sie bekriegen und sie bis zur Vernichtung schlagen, dann wird er nach Jerusalem kommen und dort sein Diadem vom Haupte nehmen und die ganze königliche Gewandung ablegen und das Christenreich Gott Vater und seinem Sohn Jesus Christus überlassen. Und wenn das Römische Reich aufgehört hat, dann wird sich ganz offen der Antichrist enthüllen und im Hause des Herrn in Jerusalem sich niederlassen. Aber während seiner Regierung werden zwei hochberühmte Männer, Elias und Henoch, auftreten, um des Herrn Ankunft zu verkünden, und der Antichrist wird sie töten lassen, aber nach drei Tagen werden sie vom Herrn wieder auferweckt werden. Dann wird große Verfolgung sein, wie sie vordem nicht gewesen ist und später nicht mehr folgen wird. Aber der Herr wird jene Tage abkürzen wegen der Auserwählten, und durch die Kraft des Herrn wird der Antichrist von Michael, dem Erzengel, auf dem Ölberg getötet werden.

Anmerkungen zu ausgewählten Stellen

*Et tunc surget rex Grecorum, cuius nomen Constans, et ipse erit rex Romanorum et Grecorum.*⁹⁶

⁹⁶ *Sib. Tib.*, ed. Sackur (wie Anm. 10), 185,1–2.

Man⁹⁷ hat zwar das *constans* nicht als Personennamen⁹⁸, sondern als simples Adjektiv deuten wollen, was auf den ersten Blick sinnvoll erscheint, doch kann für diese Ansicht nur die sog. *Bedasche Rezension*⁹⁹ angeführt werden, wo es an der fraglichen Stelle sogar heißt: *Et tunc exsurget rex nomine H animo constans. H ille idem constans erit rex Rom. et Graecorum*.¹⁰⁰ Samuel Krauss wollte dies auf den Kaiser Herakleios beziehen,¹⁰¹ fand damit aber wenig Anklang in der relevanten Literatur. Außerdem ist nicht bekannt, auf welcher Handschrift die (Erst-)Edition dieses Textes im Jahre 1583 basiert.¹⁰² Ernst Sackur hingegen sah in dem Herrscher namens „H“ Heinrich VI. (1190–1197).¹⁰³ Nun hat vor wenigen Jahren Anke Holdenried¹⁰⁴ gezeigt, dass die sog. *Bedasche Rezension* keineswegs, wie Ernst Sackur noch glaubte (und worin ihm viele Gelehrte folgten) aus dem ausgehenden 12. Jahrhundert stammt.¹⁰⁵

Inzwischen wies Andràs Kraft auf einen weiteren beachtenswerten Umstand hin.¹⁰⁶ Die Formulierung *rex Grecorum, ..., et ipse erit rex Romanorum et Grecorum* widerspiegelt schwerlich das kaiserliche Selbstbild des 4. Jahrhunderts. Vielmehr liegt hier sicher eine Übernahme aus der sog. II. Rezension der lateinischen *Pseudo-Methodios-Apokalypse* vor.¹⁰⁷ Während in der ersten lateinischen Übersetzung (im Kapitel XIII.11) die Rede vom *rex Gregorum, sive Romanorum* ist,¹⁰⁸ heißt es in der sog. II. Rezension schlicht: *rex Romanorum et Gregorum*.¹⁰⁹ Auch dieses Detail zeigt, dass das *Constans-Vaticinium* auf *Pseudo-Methodios* (bzw. auf dessen im 8. Jahrhundert über-

97 Es handelt sich, das sei ausdrücklich betont, nicht um einen Gesamtkommentar!

98 S. Krauss, Zur Erklärung der tiburtinischen Sibylle, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 10 (1901), 200–203; schlüssige Beispiele für die Verwendung von *constans* als Adjektiv versammelte Bonura, When did the Legend of the Last Emperor Originate? (wie Anm. 32), 78 in Anm. 128.

99 *Pseudo-Beda, Sibyllinorum verborum interpretatio* (nach der Ausgabe Basel 1583). PL 90, 1181B–1186C.

100 PL 90, 1185A.

101 Krauss, Zur Erklärung (wie Anm. 98), 202–203.

102 A. Holdenried, The Bedan Recension of the Sibilla Tiburtina: New Manuscript Evidence and its Implications, in: M.W. Herren/C.J. McDonough/R.G. Arthur (Hg.), *Latin Culture in the Eleventh Century*. Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Medieval Studies, Cambridge September 9–12, 1998, I (Publications of the Journal of Medieval Latin 5/1), Turnhout 2002, 410–443, hier 412 Anm. 7.

103 Sackur, *Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen* (wie Anm. 10), 132; vgl. Holdenried, The Bedan Recension (wie Anm. 102), 413.

104 Holdenried, *The Sibyl and Her Scribes* (wie Anm. 43), 4 mit Anm. 5, 8–9 und bes. Holdenried, The Bedan Recension (wie Anm. 102).

105 Sackur, *Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen* (wie Anm. 10), 127.

106 A. Kraft, Rez. zu Shoemaker, *Apocalypse of Empire*, *Plekos* 21 (2019 [erschienen 2020]) 531–547; siehe schon oben Anm. 34.

107 O. Prinz, Eine frühe abendländische Aktualisierung der lateinischen Übersetzung des Pseudo-Methodios, *Deutsches Archiv* 41 (1985), 1–23.

108 *Die Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius. Die ältesten griechischen und lateinischen Übersetzungen*, hg. von W.J. Aerts und G.A.A. Kortekaas, I: Einleitung, Texte, Indices Locorum et Nominum; II: Anmerkungen, Wörterverzeichnisse, Indices (CSCO 569/570; Subsidia 97/98), Louvain 1998, I, 175,2.

109 Prinz, Eine frühe abendländische Aktualisierung (wie Anm. 107), 15,213–214 (Kapitel XIV.2); vgl. Kraft, Rezension (wie Anm. 34), 536–537.

arbeiteter Fassung) basiert und dass eine Entstehung desselben im 4. Jahrhundert unmöglich zu sein scheint.

*Hic erit statura grandis, aspectu decorus, vultu splendidus atque per singula membrorum lineamenta decenter compositus.*¹¹⁰

Bei byzantinischen Kaisern, von denen diverse Beschreibungen ihrer Körperlichkeit erhalten blieben,¹¹¹ konnte ich keine Entsprechung finden.¹¹² Aber vielleicht ist eine Suche in lateinischen Texten erfolgreich? Immerhin findet sich in der *Reversio sanctae crucis* (nach 630; Ende 7. Jahrhundert/Mitte 8. Jahrhundert)¹¹³ zu Herakleios, eine gewisse Parallele. Die Sieger über die Perser werden kurz beschrieben. U. a. heißt es von ihm, er sei ... *corpore decorus*, ...¹¹⁴ Dies mag als ein simpler Zufall erscheinen, doch angesichts des Umstandes, dass trotz intensiver Suche *decorus* an keiner sinnvoll erscheinenden Stelle auftaucht, ist dieser Beleg doch von Belang. Dieser Text wird noch mehrfach in diesem Artikel auftauchen.

*Et ipsius regnum C et XII annis terminabitur.*¹¹⁵

Ich muss gestehen, in den einschlägigen (bzw. in den mir bekannten) apokalyptischen Texten keine Parallele zu den 112 Jahren gefunden zu haben. Die Annahme von Ernst Sackur, es handele sich um „chaldäische Spekulationen“ über einen endzeitlichen Herrscher, sind m. E. zu spekulativ und können keineswegs durch wirklich relevante Quellen (Plinius ist in dem Zusammenhang nun wirklich abwegig) bestätigt werden.¹¹⁶

*In illis ergo diebus erunt divitiae multe et terra abundanter dabit fructum, ita ut tritici modium denario uno venundetur, modium vini denario uno, modium olei denario uno.*¹¹⁷

¹¹⁰ Sib. Tib. ed. Sackur (wie Anm. 10), 185,2–4.

¹¹¹ Siehe zuletzt A. Markopoulos, Remarques sur les descriptions des empereurs byzantins dans l'hagiographie, de Malalas à Léon le diacre, *Travaux et Mémoires* 22/1 (2018), 299–312 (mit umfangreichen Literatur- und Quellenhinweisen); B. Baldwin, Physical Descriptions of Byzantine Emperors, *Byz* 51 (1981), 8–21; C. Head, Physical Descriptions of the Emperors in Byzantine Historical Writing, *Byz* 50 (1980), 226–240. Gleichsam als „Gegenentwurf“ kann man auf Beschreibungen der Physiognomie des Antichrist verweisen – siehe Brandes, Anastasios ὁ δίκτοπος (wie Anm. 26), hier bes. 57–62.

¹¹² Zur (spät-)antiken Physiognomik siehe umfassend J. Schmidt, *RE* XX (1941) sp. 1064–1074 (s.v. Physiognomik).

¹¹³ St. Borgehammar, Heraclius Learns Humility: Two Early Latin Accounts Composed for the Celebration of *Exaltatio Crucis*, *Millennium* 6 (2009), 145–201 (Texte: 180–191 = *Reversio sanctae crucis*; 192–201 = *Sermo de exaltatione sanctae crucis*); zu diesem hier in mehrfacher Hinsicht relevanten Text siehe unten bei Anm. 240 und stets die erschöpfende Einleitung von Borgehammar a.a.O. hier 148–160 zur Datierung. Vgl auch Greisiger, *Messias* (wie Anm. 6), 92–93, 132–136 und *passim*.

¹¹⁴ Borgehammar, Heraclius Learns Humility (wie Anm. 113), 182 (cap. 6): ... *uir armis strenuus, lingua eruditus, corpore decorus* ...

¹¹⁵ Sib. Tib. ed. Sackur (wie Anm. 10), 185,4–5.

¹¹⁶ Sackur, *Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen* (wie Anm. 10), 148–149.

¹¹⁷ Sib. Tib. ed. Sackur (wie Anm. 10), 185,5–8.

In der Beschreibung der glücklichen Zeiten unter dem Endzeitkaiser (bevor Gog und Magog kommen)¹¹⁸ ist die Rede davon, „dass ein *modius* Weizen für einen Denar verkauft wird, ebenso ein Maß Wein oder Öl für einen Denar“.¹¹⁹ Nun ist aber bekannt, dass man schon zu Beginn des 4. Jahrhunderts, im Rahmen der umfangreichen Reformen, die Diokletian und dann Konstantin durchführten, um die Krise, insbesondere die Währungskrise, des 3. Jahrhunderts zu überwinden,¹²⁰ den Denar abschaffte und dafür das auf dem Solidus/Nomisma basierende Währungssystem einführte (309–324).¹²¹

Schon allein dieser Umstand spricht m. E. gegen eine Entstehung in der zweiten Hälfte des 4. Jahrhunderts! Karl der Große wiederrum – auch das ist allgemein bekannt – führte den Denar im Rahmen seiner Währungsreform wieder ein.¹²² Wichtig in dem Zusammenhang waren die Entscheidungen auf der Frankfurter Synode des Jahres 794 (Frankfurter Kapitular),¹²³ wo es u. a. heißt: ... *statuit piissimus dominus noster rex ..., ut nullus homo, sive ecclesiasticus sive laicus sit, ut nunquam carius vendat annonam, sive tempore abundantiae sive tempore caritatis, quam modium publicum et noviter statutum, de modio de avena denario uno, modio ordii denarius duo ... etc.* Und

¹¹⁸ Dazu ausführlich W. Brandes, Endzeitvorstellungen und Lebenstrost in mittelbyzantinischer Zeit (7.-9. Jahrhundert), in: *Varia III* (Ποικίλα Βυζαντινά, 11), Bonn 1991, 9–62, hier 36–39; Möhring, *Weltkaiser der Endzeit* (wie Anm. 4), *passim*.

¹¹⁹ *Sib. Tib.* ed. Sackur (wie Anm. 10), 185,5

¹²⁰ Der Denar verschwand im 3. Jahrhundert. Siehe ausführlich K.W. Harl, *Coinage in the Roman Economy, 300 B.C. to A.D. 700*, Baltimore/London 1996; P. Berghaus, *Lexikon des Mittelalters* III (1986), 694 (s.v. Denar).

¹²¹ C. Morrisson, *Byzance et sa monnaie (IVe - XVe siècle)* (Réalités Byzantines, 15), Paris 2015, 15–18; P. Berghaus, *Lexikon des Mittelalters* VII (1995), 2034 (s.v. Solidus).

¹²² Zwar gab es in Europa seit den 670er Jahren verschiedene Ansätze, den Silberdenar einzuführen – siehe etwa Ph. Grierson, *The Coins of Medieval Europe*, London 1991, 9–39; R. Naismith, Kings, Crisis and Coinage Reforms in the Mid-Eighth Century, *Early Medieval Europe* 20 (2012), 291–332; R. Naismith, Gold Coinage and its Use in the Post-Roman West, *Speculum* 89 (2014), 273–306; jeweils mit weiterführender Literatur; doch entwickelte erst die Währungsreform Karls des Großen den allgemeinen „Durchbruch“. Siehe noch P. Spufford, *Money and its Use in Medieval Europe*, Cambridge 1991; die relevanten Texte bequem einsehbar bei W. Jesse, *Quellenbuch zur Münz- und Geldgeschichte des Mittelalters*, Halle 1924 (Nachdruck Aalen 1968), 9–14; S. Coupland, Charlemagne's Coinage. Ideology and Economy, in: J. Story (ed.), *Charlemagne. Empire and Society*, Manchester/New York 2005, 221–229; S. Coupland, The Importance of Coinage in the Carolingian World, *Early Medieval Europe* 30 (2022), 384–407; H. Witthöft, *Denarius novus, modius publicus und libra panis* im Frankfurter Kapitulare. Elemente und Struktur einer materiellen Ordnung in fränkischer Zeit, in: R. Berndt (Hg.), *Das Frankfurter Konzil von 794. Kristallisationspunkt karolingischer Kultur*, I-II (Quellen und Abhandlungen zur mittelhochrheinischen Kirchengeschichte, 80), Mainz 1997, 219–252; präziser Überblick mit neuerer Literatur bei S. Steinbach, „Mittelalterliche“ Münzprägung zwischen dem 6. und 11. Jahrhundert – Merowingische Macht und ottonische Ohnmacht? in: J. Jarnut/J. Strothmann (Hg.), *Die Merowingischen Monetarmünzen als Quelle zum Verständnis des 7. Jahrhunderts in Gallien* (Mittelalterstudien 27), Paderborn 2013, 573–584.

¹²³ Dazu siehe umfassend den eben in Anm. 122 zitierten Sammelband *Das Frankfurter Konzil von 794*, hg. von R. Berndt.

dann: *De denariis autem certissime sciatis nostrum edictum, quod in omni loco, in omne civitate et in omni empturio similiter vadant isti novi denarii et accipiantur ab omnibus.*¹²⁴ Für die nächsten Jahrhunderte blieb der Solidus die „normale“ Währung. Mithin spricht auch diese Stelle für eine Entstehung des *Vaticiniums* im 9. oder 10. Jahrhundert.

*Et ipse rex scripturam habebit ante oculos dicentem: „Rex Romanorum omne sibi vindicet regnum christianorum“.*¹²⁵

Meines Wissens gibt es keine literarische Parallele bzw. Vorbild für diese Zeilen. Dass diverse aufgefundene Schriften (*scriptura*) im heidnischen wie im christlichen Altertum und Mittelalter eine beträchtliche Rolle spielten, ist bekannt.¹²⁶

Eine Verbindung zwischen der *Tiburtinischen Sibylle* und einem „Buch“, das sei immerhin hier angeführt, findet sich bei Laktanz in dessen berühmter Liste der Sibyllen,¹²⁷ wo der *Tiburtinische Sibylle* die Nummer 10 zugeteilt wurde. In Tibur, wo diese Sibylle als Gottheit verehrt wurde, fand man angeblich im Fluss ihr Bild mit einem Buch in den Händen.¹²⁸ Man könnte immerhin auf die Bedeutung von sibyllinischen Texten für das gesamte lateinische Mittelalter verweisen.¹²⁹

*Omnes ergo insulas et civitates paganorum devastabit et universa idolorum temple destruet, et omnes paganos ad baptismum convocabit et per omnia templa crux Iesu Christi erigetur.*¹³⁰

124 MGH *Legum sectio II. Capitularia regum Francorum*, I, ed. A. Boretius, Hannover 1883, 74, 19–21. 31–33; siehe noch H. Mordek, Bemerkungen zum Frankfurter Kapitular Karls des Großen (794), in: H. Mordek, *Studien zur fränkischen Herrschergesetzgebung. Aufsätze über Kapitularien und Kapitulariensammlungen*, ausgewählt zum 60. Geburtstag, Frankfurt 2000, 193–203; H. Mordek, Aachen, Frankfurt, Reims. Beobachtungen zur Genese und Tradition des »Capitulare Francofurtense«, in: *Das Frankfurter Konzil von 794*, I (wie Anm. 122), 125–148.

125 *Sib. Tib.* ed. Sackur (wie Anm. 10), 185,8–10.

126 Siehe nur W. Speyer, *Bücherfunde in der Glaubenswerbung der Antike* (Hypomnemata 24). Göttingen 1970 sowie W. Speyer, *Die literarische Fälschung im heidnischen und christlichen Altertum. Ein Versuch ihrer Deutung* (Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft, 1. Abt., 2. T.), München 1971.

127 Gauger/Kurfeß, *Sibyllinische Weissagungen* (wie Anm. 31), 252–293; U. Treu, in: *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung*, hg. von W. Schneemelcher, 6. Aufl. der von E. Hennecke begründeten Sammlung, II: *Apostolisches, Apokalypsen und Verwandtes*, Tübingen 1997, 591–619.

128 *Lactance, Institutions divines*, livre I, introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes par P. Monat (Sources chrétiennes, 326), Paris 1986, 78/80 (I,6,12): ..., *decimam Tiburtem nomine Albuneam, quae Tiburi colatur ot dea iuxta ripaeamnis Aniensis, cuius in gurgite simulacrum eius inuentum esse dicitur tenens in manu librum cuius sortes senatus in Capitolio abstulerit*. Man denke auch an Augustins *De civitate Dei* (Kap. 18,23).

129 Siehe die von Chr. Jostmann, *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica. Papsttum und Prophetie im 13. Jahrhundert* (MGH-Schriften 54), Hannover 2006, 145 Anm. 445 aufgelisteten Untersuchungen, bes. B. McGinn, *Teste David cum Sibylla: The Significance of the Sibylline Tradition in the Middle Ages*, in: J. Kirshner/S. F. Wemple (Hg.), *Women of the Medieval World. Essays in Honour of John H. Mundy*, Oxford 1985, 7–35.

130 *Sib. Tib.* ed. Sackur (wie Anm. 10), 185,10–13.

Es werden keine Ismaeliten vel sim. erwähnt, was Stephen Shoemaker u. a. veranlasste, hier eine gesicherte Entstehungszeit im 4. Jahrhundert zu sehen.¹³¹ Dagegen sprachen sich Christopher Bonura und Gian Luca Potestà aus.¹³² Bonura meinte, dass sich hinter den Heiden tatsächlich die Ismaeliten, die Araber, verbergen, zumal in der *Sibylla Tiburtina* über Otto II. zu lesen ist, dass er mit Heiden kämpfen werde, womit allein Muslime gemeint sein können.¹³³

Christopher Bonura geht allerdings – so scheint mir – zu weit, wenn er meint, dass das *Constans-Vaticinium* auf der griechischen Fassung der *Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodios* basiere.¹³⁴ Er zitiert die von ihm angezogene Passage inkorrekt und meint, dass die hier geschilderten „Erfolge“ der muslimischen Araber¹³⁵ gleichsam „umgedreht“ und im *Constans-Vaticinium* dem Endzeitkaiser zugeschrieben wurden. Das ist weder beweisbar noch plausibel und hat keine Basis im Wortlaut des Textes.¹³⁶

Dass der Interpolator des *Constans-Vaticiniums* die Araber nicht explizit erwähnt, sollte nicht überbewertet werden. Die Araber tauchen zwar in der von Ernst Sackur edierten Fassung (= Rezension II) nicht auf, in den späteren Rezensionen werden sie jedoch erwähnt.¹³⁷

Ebenso fragte Christopher Bonura berechtigt, welche Inseln und Städte der „Heiden“ im 4. Jahrhundert bekriegt werden sollten. Jeder, der sich nur oberflächlich im 4. Jahrhundert auskennt, wird erkennen, dass diese „Inseln“ und „Städte“ der „Heiden“ eine pure Fiktion sind, ersonnen von einem Interpolator, dem die tatsächlichen Verhältnisse des Heidentums oder des Schicksals der „heidnischen“ Kultstätten in der Spätantike völlig unbekannt waren.¹³⁸ Auf die Unmöglichkeit dieser Vorstellung bei

131 Shoemaker, „The Reign of God Has Come“ (wie Anm. 16), 545; Shoemaker, *Apocalypse of Empire* (wie Anm. 24), 48 (... the enemies of Christ are the pagans and the Jews, as one would certainly [!] expect from a late fourth-century composition).

132 Bonura, When did the Legend of the Last Emperor Originate? (wie Anm. 32), 75–76; Potestà, *The Vaticinium of Constans* (wie Anm. 3), 283.

133 *Sib. Tib.* ed. Sackur (wie Anm. 10), 182,19: ... *pugne inter paganos et christianos* ...

134 Bonura, When did the Legend of the Last Emperor Originate? (wie Anm. 32), 75 mit Anm. 118. Dass die betreffende Passage (siehe die folgende Anm.) nur in der griechischen Fassung auftauche, wie a.a.O. behauptet, ist falsch. Erst mit Kap. XIII.7 beginnt die bekannte Interpolation, die die lateinische und die syrische Version nicht enthalten (dazu mit allen Details Brandes, *Die Belagerung Konstantinopels 717/718 als apokalyptisches Ereignis* [wie Anm. 23], 65–91).

135 *Ps.-Meth. gr./lat.* (Aerts/Kortekaas) (wie Anm. 108), Kap. XIII.6 (Bd. I, 170): ἐρήμωσαν Περσίδα τε καὶ Ῥωμανίαν, Κίλικίαν τε καὶ Συρίαν, Καππαδοκίαν τε καὶ Ἰσαυρίαν καὶ Ἀφρικὴν καὶ Σικελίαν καὶ τοὺς κατοικοῦντας πλησίον Ῥώμης καὶ τὰς νήσους, ... Nota bene: der lateinische Text findet sich a.a.O. 171.

136 Mithin unsaubere Arbeit!

137 Vgl. Bonura, When did the Legend of the Last Emperor Originate? (wie Anm. 32), 75 mit Anm. 113.

138 Siehe z. B. die Beiträge in J. Hahn (Hg.), *Spätantiker Staat und religiöser Konflikt* (Millennium-Studien 34), Berlin/Boston 2011, wo die Frage des Heidentums und der Maßnahmen gegen es, umfassend behandelt werden; siehe auch J. Hahn/St. Emmel/U. Gotter (Hg.), *From Temple to Church. Destruction and Renewal of Local Cultic Topography in Late Antiquity* (Religions in the Graeco-Roman world,

einem Autor des 4. Jahrhunderts verwies schon Gian Luca Potestà.¹³⁹ Im 4. Jahrhundert gab es noch viele Heiden, auch in den Eliten des Reiches, aber eben innerhalb des Römischen Reiches.¹⁴⁰ Und die simple Fragen, welche „Städte“ und „Inseln“ im oströmischen Reich des 4. Jahrhundert gemeint sein könnten, kann keine sinnvolle Antwort finden. In einem westlichen (lateinischen!) Zusammenhang jedoch, allerdings bezogen auf das 9. und 10. Jahrhundert, kann man problemlos „Inseln“ und „Städte“ von *pagani* (= muslimische Araber!) finden.

Wichtig ist also der einfach und umfassend belegbare Umstand, dass gerade im 9. Jahrhundert der Begriff *pagani* permanent für die muslimischen Araber gebraucht wurde.¹⁴¹ Den bekannten Hintergrund stellen die arabischen Angriffe gegen Italien und Rom dar, die in dieser Zeit für große Besorgnis sorgten. Hinzu kamen Angriffe vom südfranzösischen Fraxinetum (in der Nähe von Fréjus) aus,¹⁴² wo die Araber von 888/889 bis ca. 972 einen Brückenkopf unterhielten, von dem aus sie unablässig die am westlichen Mittelmeer gelegenen Regionen bedrohten.¹⁴³

Bereits aus dem März 808 stammt ein Quellenbeleg (Papst Leo III. schreibt an Karl den Großen), in dem arabishe Angriffe gegen die italienische Küste als *infestatio paganorum* bezeichnet werden.¹⁴⁴ Bereits in der zweiten Hälfte des 8. Jahrhunderts (nach 778) schrieb Hugeburc, die Autorin einer Lebensbeschreibung des Heiligen Willibald, von *pagani Sarraceni*.¹⁴⁵ In sehr großer Anzahl ist dieser Sprachgebrauch

163), Leiden etc. 2008; grundlegend bleibt K.-L. Noethlichs, *Die gesetzgeberischen Maßnahmen des vierten Jahrhunderts gegen Häretiker, Heiden und Juden*, Köln 1971; K.-L. Noethlichs, *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* XIII (1986) sp. 1149–1190 (s.v. Heidenverfolgung). Auch für das 4. Jahrhundert relevant sind die Beiträge in: J. van Oort/D. Wyrwa (Hg.), *Heiden und Christen im 5. Jahrhundert* (Studien der Patristischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft 5), Leuven 1998.

139 Potestà wie oben in Anm. 132.

140 Siehe z. B. noch J. Maxwell, Paganism and Christianization, in: S.F. Johnson (Hg.), *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, Oxford 2012, 849–875.

141 St. Weinberger, Païens et mauvais chrétiens. L'explication du mal dans la Provence des X^e et XI^e siècle, *Annales du Midi* 98 (1986), 317–326.

142 M. Ballan, Fraxinetum. An Islamic Frontier State in Tenth-Century Provence, *Comitatus* 41 (2010), 23–76.

143 K. Versteegh, The Arab Presence in France and Switzerland in the 10th Century, *Arabica* 37 (1990), 359–388; für einen Überblick siehe (immer noch) E. Eickhoff, *Seekrieg und Seepolitik zwischen Islam und Abendland. Das Mittelmeer unter byzantinischer und arabischer Hegemonie (650–1040)*, Berlin 1966, *passim*.

144 Leo III papa, ep. 1, ed. K. Hampe, *MGH Epp.* V., München 1978, 88,23–26; *JE* 2516 = *J*³ 4854.

145 Hygeburc, *Vita Willibaldi*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, *MGH SS* XV/1, Hannover 1887, 94,14 (cap. 4); vgl. u. a. J. Palmer, Defining paganism in the Carolingian World, *Early Medieval Europe* 15 (2007), 402–425, hier bes. 403–404; E. Rotter, *Abendland und Sarazenen. Das okzidentale Araberbild und seine Entstehung im Frühmittelalter* (Studien zur Sprache, Geschichte und Kultur des islamischen Orients 11), Berlin/New York 1986, 43–65, bes. 49 (zur Stelle); E. Heyse, *Lexikon des Mittelalters* V (1991), 157.

(*pagani* = Araber) im Briefregister Papst Johannes VIII. (872–882) belegt: so ep. 22 (vom 15.11. 876) an Karl den Kahlen;¹⁴⁶ ep. 27 (vom 16.11. 876) an Kaiserin Richild;¹⁴⁷ ep. 29 (vom 18.12. 876) an Waifar von Salerno;¹⁴⁸ ep. 31 (vom 10.2. 877) an Karl den Kahlen;¹⁴⁹ ep. 33 (vom 10.2. 877) an Kaiserin Richild;¹⁵⁰ ep. 36 (vom November 876) an die Erzbischöfe und Bischöfe im Reiche Karls des Kahlen;¹⁵¹ ep. 46 (vom 17.4. 877) an Bischof Aio von Benevent;¹⁵² ep. 56 (vom Mai 877) an Karl den Kahlen;¹⁵³ ep. 74 (Anfang April 878) an Berengar von Friaul;¹⁵⁴ ep. 78 an Lambert von Spoleto (vom Februar 878);¹⁵⁵ ep. 87 (vom April 878) an Ludwig den Stammmler;¹⁵⁶ ep. 150 (878) an die Bischöfe im Reiche Ludwigs des Stammmlers;¹⁵⁷ ep. 176 (vom April 879) an Pandulf von Capua;¹⁵⁸ ep. 186 (Ende Juni 879) an Bischof Wigbod von Parma;¹⁵⁹ ep. 193 (vom 7.6. 879) an König Karlmann;¹⁶⁰ ep. 205 (Juni 879) an Ludwig III.;¹⁶¹ ep. 217 (September 879) an den Präfekten Pulchar von Amalfi;¹⁶² ep. 224 (Februar/März 880) an Karl III.;¹⁶³ ep. 225 (April 880) an Karl III.;¹⁶⁴ ep. 246 (vom 24.10. 879) an Bischof Petrus und Präfekt Pulchar von Amalfi;¹⁶⁵ ep. 310 (August 882) an Erzbischof Anselm von Mailand.¹⁶⁶ Auch in den Fragmenten des Registers der Briefe Johannes VIII. finden sich derartige Belege: Nr. 22 (Mai 873) an Karlmann;¹⁶⁷ Nr. 27 (872/882) an *principes* von Sardinien.¹⁶⁸ Und auch in einem Brief an die gallischen Bischöfe vom 17.2. 876 werden die Araber als *pagani* bezeichnet.¹⁶⁹ An dieser Stelle soll die Auflistung derartiger Belege beendet

146 *Iohannis VIII. papae epistolae*, ed. E. Caspar, *MGH Epp.* VII, München 1978, 19–21; *JE* 3061 = *J*³ 6482.

147 *Iohannis VIII. papae epistolae*, 25,36; *JE* 3064 = *J*³ 6486.

148 *Iohannis VIII. papae epistolae*, 28,7–8; *JE* 3074 = *J*³ 6498.

149 *Iohannis VIII. papae epistolae*, 29–30 (mehrfach); *JE* 3077 = *J*³ 6503.

150 *Iohannis VIII. papae epistolae*, 32,25; 33,5; *JE* 3078 = *J*³ 6504.

151 *Iohannis VIII. papae epistolae*, 36,4; *JE* 3081 = *J*³ 6488.

152 *Iohannis VIII. papae epistolae*, 45,5; *JE* 3091 = *J*³ 6525.

153 *Iohannis VIII. papae epistolae*, 51,10; *JE* 3099 = *J*³ 6543.

154 *Iohannis VIII. papae epistolae*, 70,4; *JE* 3123 = *J*³ 6609.

155 *Iohannis VIII. papae epistolae*, 74,21; *JE* 3121 = *J*³ 6580.

156 *Iohannis VIII. papae epistolae*, 83,1–4; *JE* 3137 = *J*³ 6605.

157 *Iohannis VIII. papae epistolae*, 126,35; *JE* 3195 = *J*³ 6742.

158 *Iohannis VIII. papae epistolae*, 141,33; *JE* 3238 = *J*³ 6777.

159 *Iohannis VIII. papae epistolae*, 148,31; *JE* 3250 = *J*³ 6810.

160 *Iohannis VIII. papae epistolae*, 155,4; *JE* 3256 = *J*³ 6794.

161 *Iohannis VIII. papae epistolae*, 165,7; *JE* 3254 = *J*³ 6814.

162 *Iohannis VIII. papae epistolae*, 194,16; *JE* 3281 = *J*³ 6855.

163 *Iohannis VIII. papae epistolae*, 194,16; *JE* 3288 = *J*³ 6903.

164 *Iohannis VIII. papae epistolae*, 200,22; *JE* 3289 = *J*³ 6905.

165 *Iohannis VIII. papae epistolae*, 215,12; *JE* 3304 = *J*³ 6868.

166 *Iohannis VIII. papae epistolae*, 269,21; *JE* 3382 = *J*³ 7010.

167 *Fragmenta registri Iohannis VIII. papae*, ed. E. Caspar, *MGH Epp.* VII., München 1978, 284,14; *JE* 2971 = *J*³ 6347.

168 *Fragmenta registri Iohannis VIII. papae*, 89,5; *JE* 2983 = *J*³ 7022.

169 *Iohannis VIII. papae epistolae passim collectae*, hg. E. Caspar/G. Laehr, *MGH Epp.* VII., München 1987, 319,37; *JE* 3038 = *J*³ 6434.

werden.¹⁷⁰ Mit Leichtigkeit, das soll aber betont werden, könnte man noch einige Seiten mit derartigen Belegen gefüllt werden. Sehr bedeutend in diesem Zusammenhang ist auch der Hinweis von Christopher Bonura,¹⁷¹ dass in der einen (interpolierten) Herrscherliste,¹⁷² ein „rex O“ – als Otto II. identifiziert – gegen *pagani* kämpfte.¹⁷³ Gemeint sind wohl die seine Kämpfe 982 in Unteritalien, die in einer schweren Niederlage endeten.¹⁷⁴ Dies entspricht gänzlich dem Sprachgebrauch des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts.

Außerdem ist zu beachten,¹⁷⁵ dass in den Rezensionen III und IV der *Sibylla Tiburtina*¹⁷⁶ sehr wohl die Araber (Sarazenen) auftauchen.¹⁷⁷ Sehr viel Gewicht sollte man allerdings nicht auf diesen Umstand legen, denn beide Texte sind zweifellos von *Pseudo-Methodios* abhängig.

Immerhin: Wenn die Ansicht von Bernard McGinn, dem Editor der Rezension IV, zutrifft, nämlich dass dieselbe direkt auf die verlorene Rezension I, die sog. *Ottonische Sibylle* (entstanden um 1000) zurückgeht (zumindest teilweise), wäre dieser Umstand doch beachtenswert.¹⁷⁸ Überhaupt, das sei auch an dieser Stelle angemerkt, ist heute der Quellenwert der von Ernst Sackur edierten Rezension II zunehmend fraglich geworden – ein Umstand, der (neben vielen anderen) gegen Stephen Shoemakers Interpretation spricht. Eine modernen Ansprüchen genügende Edition der Rezension II (der ältesten erhaltenen) ist ein wichtiges Desiderat. Allerdings dürfte die sehr große

170 In späterer Zeit sind derartige Belege Legion. Siehe N. Bade, Stereotype Vorstellungen? Die christlich-abendländische Wahrnehmung der Sarazenen im Spiegel der französischen Historiographie des 11. Jahrhunderts, in: N. Bade/B. Freudenberg (Hg.), *Von Sarazenen und Juden, Heiden und Häretikern*, Bochum 2013, 13–53 mit weiterführenden Literaturangaben in Anm. 14 auf S. 16. Zahlreiche einschlägige Belege – die hier nicht wiederholt werden – (und umfassende Literaturangaben) in N. Bade, *Die christlich-abendländische Wahrnehmung vom Islam und von den Muslimen im Spiegel historiographischer Werke des frühen Mittelalters* (Studien zur Geschichtsforschung des Mittelalters 32), Hamburg 2015, 33, 54–56, 239, 156, 159 f., 164, 191, 211, 282, 325 und *passim*.

171 Bonura, When did the Legend of the Last Emperor Originate? (wie Anm. 32), 76.

172 *Sib. Tib.* ed. Sackur (wie Anm. 10), 182,15.23.

173 *Sib. Tib.* ed. Sackur (wie Anm. 10), 182,15.23: *Et de ipso O procedet alius O potentissimus et erunt sub eo pugne inter paganos et christianos et sanguis Grecorum fundetur*. Zu dieser sog. 1. Interpolation siehe auch den Überblick über seine Gestalt in den verschiedenen Rezensionen bei McGinn, *Oracular Transformations* (wie Anm. 39), 624.

174 Siehe zu den Details und Quellen die *PmbZ* 26212; Bonura, When did the Legend of the Last Emperor Originate? (wie Anm. 32), 76.

175 So schon Bonura, When did the Legend of the Last Emperor Originate? (wie Anm. 32), 75 Anm. 113.

176 Zu den verschiedenen Fassungen siehe (u. a.) Holdenried, *The Sibyl and Her Scribes* (wie Anm. 43), 4–5; Rezension III: Erdmann, *Endkaiserglaube* (wie Anm. 44), 396–398; Rezension IV: McGinn, *Oracular Transformations* (wie Anm. 39), 636–644.

177 Erdmann, *Endkaiserglaube* (wie Anm. 44), 398; McGinn, *Oracular Transformations* (wie Anm. 39), 636–642 (Zeile 178).

178 McGinn, *Oracular Transformations* (wie Anm. 39), 634.

Anzahl der verfügbaren Handschriften¹⁷⁹ der Erfüllung dieses Wunsches entgegenstehen. Klar ist jedoch, dass man immer dann, wenn man weitgehende Schlussfolgerungen (wie dies Shoemaker tat) auf den von Ernst Sackur edierten Text (im Jahre 1898) aufbaut, äußerste Vorsicht geboten ist und diese Schlussfolgerungen nur unter Vorbehalt formuliert werden dürfen.

Unterstellt man eine Entstehungszeit des *Constans-Vaticiniums* im 9. (oder 10.) Jahrhundert, löst sich das Problem mit den heidnischen „Städten“ und „Inseln“ von selbst. Mit den Verhältnissen des 4. Jahrhunderts habe diese offensichtlich herzlich wenig zu tun. Von einem „detailed knowledge“ der Verhältnisse am Ende der Regierungszeit Constantius' II. jedenfalls, wie Stephen Shoemaker behauptet,¹⁸⁰ kann keine Rede sein!

Bereits Paul Alexander, etwa Wilhelm Bousset folgend,¹⁸¹ untersuchte eine offensichtliche Verwandtschaft der koptischen (einige Fragmente bezeugen, dass der Text auch auf Griechisch existierte¹⁸²) *Elijah-Apokalypse*¹⁸³ mit dem von ihm edierten *Oracle von Baalbek*.¹⁸⁴ Hier taucht (unter zahlreichen anderen Herrschern) ein „king of the sun“ auf. Von ihm wird (u. a.) berichtet: „He will command that the Pagans and the Lawless Ones¹⁸⁵ be killed. He will command that the temples of the Pagans be plundered and their priests destroyed. He will command that the shrines¹⁸⁶ of the saints be rebuilt.“¹⁸⁷ Die sehr große Nähe zum *Constans-Vaticiniums* liegt auf der Hand. Und auch eine Passage, allerdings hier bezogen auf die Kaiser Markian und Theodosios II. (in dieser Reihenfolge), gemahnt an diesen Text:

καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα ἀναστήσονται βασιλεῖς δύο, Μαρκιανὸς καὶ Θεοδόσιος, δυνάσται κραταιοί, πολεμισταὶ καὶ δικαιοκρίται, διδάσκαλοι τῆς πίστεως, καὶ λύσουσι τοὺς καταλειφθέντας ναοὺς τῶν Ἑλ-λήνων, καὶ γενήσονται οἱ ναοὶ τῶν ἔθνων εἰς τάφους τῶν ἁγίων.¹⁸⁸

¹⁷⁹ Siehe oben im Text nach Anm. 34.

¹⁸⁰ Shoemaker, *The Tiburtine Sibyl* (wie Anm. 16), 223.

¹⁸¹ W. Bousset, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Eschatologie, *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 20 (1900), 103–131, 261–290, hier 103–112.

¹⁸² BHG 572z.

¹⁸³ G. Steindorff, *Die Apokalypse des Elias, eine unbekannte Apokalypse und Bruchstücke der Sophonias-Apokalypse*, Leipzig 1899 (CAVT 167); hier benutzt in der englischen Übersetzung von D. Frankfurter, *Elijah in Upper Egypt. The Apocalypse of Elijah and Early Egyptian Christianity*, Minneapolis 1993, 299–328.

¹⁸⁴ *Oracle of Baalbek*, ed. Alexander (wie Anm. 36), 38–40, 60, 113–114, 137 und *passim*; siehe schon Frankfurter, *Elijah* (wie Anm. 183), 24 f. Bei Shoemaker, *The Tiburtine Sibyl. A New Translation* (wie Anm. 16), 514 wird daraus, dass „the basic building blocks of this Last Emperor tradition“ bereits im 3. Jahrhundert existiert habe. Das allerdings geht entschieden zu weit bzw. ist schlicht Unsinn!

¹⁸⁵ Diese könnten vielleicht mit den Juden identifiziert werden.

¹⁸⁶ Nach Frankfurter, *Elijah* (wie Anm. 183), 312 Anm. 49 eher mit „temple“ zu übersetzen.

¹⁸⁷ Frankfurter, *Elijah* (wie Anm. 183), 312 (47c).

¹⁸⁸ *Oracle of Baalbek*, ed. Alexander (wie Anm. 36), 14–15 (Z. 99–103).

Dass hier ein Element (aber eben auch nur eines) der „Sage“ vom Endzeitkaiser vorzuliegen scheint, wurde schon festgestellt. Paul Alexander meinte, dass die von ihm identifizierte *Theodosianische Sibylle* aus dem Ende des 4. Jahrhunderts die *Elijah-Apokalypse* benutzte.¹⁸⁹

Reicht diese Stelle bezüglich des „Königs der Sonne“ der *Elijah-Apokalypse* und seine Übernahme in die (nicht erhaltene) *Theodosianische Sibylle* aus, zu schließen, dass das *Constans-Vaticinium* bereits in dieser enthalten war? Obwohl das *Orakel von Baalbek* an vielen Stellen eine deutliche Verwandtschaft, wenn nicht direkte Abhängigkeit, von der *Elijah-Apokalypse* aufweist,¹⁹⁰ ist doch nur diese eine Stelle innerhalb des Textes des *Constans-Vaticiniums* nachweisbar. Aber es ist jedenfalls nicht zu leugnen, dass der unbekannte Interpolator direkt oder indirekt auf die lateinische Übersetzung der *Theodosianischen Sibylle* Zugriff hatte, wann auch immer diese Übersetzung entstand.

*Tunc namque preveniet Egiptus et Etiopia manus eius dare Deo.*¹⁹¹

In der LXX heißt es: Αἰθιοπία προφθάσει χεῖρα αὐτῆς τῷ θεῷ Ps. 68,32(syr. 31) (Kūš wird die Macht Gott übergeben). Dieser Psalm ist für das Geschichtskonzept des *Pseudo-Methodios* von zentraler Bedeutung.¹⁹² Insbesondere eine eventuelle Bedeutung von Kūš (Äthiopien bzw. Nubien) wurde heftig diskutiert.¹⁹³ An dieser Stelle möchte ich mich an

189 *Oracle of Baalbek*, ed. Alexander (wie Anm. 36), 60, 137; zur *Theodosianischen Sibylle* siehe *Oracle of Baalbek*, ed. Alexander (wie Anm. 36), 48–65, 136–137 und oben bei Anm. 46–48.

190 Siehe u. a. *Oracle of Baalbek*, ed. Alexander (wie Anm. 36), 20–21 (Z. 191–192), 21 (l. 196. 206–207) usw. Siehe auch Frankfurter, *Elijah* (wie Anm. 183), 308 mit den Anm. 32 und 33, 309 mit Anm. 37, 312 mit Anm. 50 usw.

191 *Sib. Tib.* ed. Sackur (wie Anm. 10), 185,13–14.

192 *Ps.-Meth. syr.*, trad. Reinink (wie Anm. 86), 29–31 (mit den kommentierenden Anmerkungen) und an anderen Stellen; vgl. insbes. (neben der in der folgenden Anm. genannten Literatur) Reinink, *Ps.-Methodius: a Concept of History* (wie Anm. 86), bes. 161–168, sowie seine wichtige Einleitung zu seiner deutschen Übersetzung des *Pseudo-Methodios* (*Ps.-Meth. syr.*, trad. Reinink); Martinez, *The King of Rūm* (wie Anm. 40), 253–254.

193 Schon Sackur (Sackur, *Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen* [wie Anm. 10], 26–33, 170–171) hatte sich ausführlich mit dem Psalm befasst; L. Greisiger, Ein nubischer Erlöserkönig: Kūš in syrischen Apokalypsen des 7. Jahrhunderts, in: S.G. Vashalomidze/L. Greisiger (Hg.), *Der christliche Orient und seine Umwelt. Gesammelte Studien zu Ehren Jürgen Tubachs anlässlich seines 60. Geburtstags*, Wiesbaden 2007, 189–213; L. Greisiger, *Messias* (wie Anm. 6), 177–178; Möhring, *Weltkaiser der Endzeit* (wie Anm. 4), u. a. 62–63; P.J. Alexander, *Psevd-Mefodij i Efiopija, Antičnaja drevnost' i srednie veka* 10 (1973), 21–27 (auch in: P.J. Alexander, *Religious and Political History and Thought in the Byzantine Empire*, London 1978, Nr. XI); P.J. Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (wie Anm. 40), 17–18, 29, 38–40 und *passim*; P.J. Alexander, *Medieval Apocalypses as Historical Sources, The American Historical Review* 73 (1968), 997–1018 (auch in: P.J. Alexander, *Religious and Political History*, Nr. XIII), bes. 1006; P.J. Alexander, *Byzantium and the Migration of Literary Works and Motifs: The Legend of the Last Roman Emperor, Medievalia et Humanistica* N.S. 2 (1971), 47–68 (auch in: P.J. Alexander, *Religious and Political History*, Nr. XII), bes. 58–59; Martinez, *The King of Rūm* (wie Anm. 40), hier bes. 253–254; F.J. Martinez, *The Apocalyptic Genre in Syriac* (wie Anm. 85), hier 347–348.

dieser interessanten Debatte nicht beteiligen.¹⁹⁴ Festzuhalten bleibt, dass gerade die Zitierung dieses Psalms im *Constans-Vaticinium* schon immer als ein deutliches Zeichen für den Primat der *Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodios* darstellt.¹⁹⁵ Und auch dann, wenn sich kein direktes Zitat nachweisen lässt, ist dieser Umstand nicht zu leugnen. Wir kennen bei Weitem nicht alle Quellen, die der Kompilator des *Constans-Vaticiniums* benutzte (weshalb, das sei *en passant* angemerkt, auch seine konkrete Arbeitsweise nur ungenügend erschlossen werden kann). So lange keine „sichere“ Quelle benannt werden kann, die sicher und methodisch nicht anfechtbar vor *Pseudo-Methodios* (also vor ca. 690/692¹⁹⁶) datiert werden kann und wo eben dieser Psalm in diesem Kontext eine zentrale Rolle spielt, muss in zeitlicher (wie in thematischer) Hinsicht *Pseudo-Methodios* als indirekte Quelle des *Vaticiniums* angesehen werden. Dies gebietet die Logik der historischen Quellenkritik.¹⁹⁷ Unterschiede in der textualen Verwendung des Psalms sprechen keineswegs gegen diese Tatsache.¹⁹⁸ Und eine wie auch immer geartete „earlier tradition about the Last Emperor“, die sich in der *Tiburtinischen Sibylle* (im *Constans-Vaticinium*) manifestiere und einem „Syriac milieu“ des 7. Jahrhunderts zuzuordnen sei,¹⁹⁹ anzunehmen, scheitert eben an der Unmöglichkeit, einen belastbaren Textzeugen zu präsentieren.

*Qui vero cruce Iesu Christi non adoravit gladio punietur, et cum completi fuerint centum et viginti anni, Iudei convertentur ad Dominum, et erit ab omnibus sepulcrum eius gloriosum. In diebus illis salvabitur Iuda et Israhel habitabit confidenter.*²⁰⁰

Schon Ernst Sackur, Franz Kampers, Hannes Möhring, Lutz Greisiger und andere²⁰¹ verwiesen darauf, dass sich hier eine enge Verwandtschaft zu einem *vaticinium* in den *Scriptores historiae Augustae* zeige (*vita Taciti*) zu bestehen scheint. Man könnte allerdings auch auf das im Alten Testament (Deut. 34,7) angegebene Lebensalter von

194 Zu den historischen Hintergründen in der Zeit um 500 siehe zuletzt Ph. M. Forness, *Praeaching Christianity in the Roman Near East*, Oxford 2018, 122–125 mit der älteren Literatur.

195 Siehe die bei Greisiger, Ein nubischer Erlöserkönig (wie Anm. 193) erwähnte Literatur; vgl. auch Shoemaker, *Apocalypse of Empire* (wie Anm. 24), 56.

196 Zur Zurückweisung des gescheiterten Versuchs von Shoemaker, die *Pseudo-Methodios-Apokalypse* früher zu datieren, siehe oben bei Anm. 87–88.

197 Allen, die das bezweifeln, sei die Lektüre (des „Klassikers“) von Bernheim, *Lehrbuch der historischen Methode* (wie Anm. 68), bes. 324–561 ans Herz gelegt. Dieser Umstand wurde richtig von Bonura, *When did the Legend of the Last Emperor Originate?* (wie Anm. 32), 55 hervorgehoben.

198 So etwa Shoemaker, *Apocalypse of Empire* (wie Anm. 24), 56–58.

199 Shoemaker, *Apocalypse of Empire* (wie Anm. 24), 58.

200 *Sib. Tib.* ed. Sackur (wie Anm. 10), 185,14–19.

201 Sackur, *Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen* (wie Anm. 10), 129, 147–148, 169; F. Kampers, *Kaiserprophetien und Kaisersagen im Mittelalter. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der deutschen Kaiseridee*, München 1895, 21–22, 224–225; Möhring, *Weltkaiser der Endzeit* (wie Anm. 4), 51; Greisiger, *Messias* (wie Anm. 6), 172 mit Anm. 441.

120 Jahren von Mose rekurrieren (oder auf weitere biblische Stellen, wo diese Zahl eine Rolle spielt),²⁰² doch stellt dies bestenfalls eine Möglichkeit dar.

In der *Vita Taciti* (XIV.5–XV.5) ist die Rede von einem zukünftigen Herrscher, der unerhörte militärische Erfolge erringen werde („die gesamte vom Ozean umschlossene Erde nach Überwindung aller Völker sich untertan machen“) und ein Lebensalter von 120 Jahren erreicht.²⁰³ Diese sehr bemerkenswerte Prophezeiung hat man, wie gesagt mit dem *Constans-Vaticinium* in Verbindung gebracht. Das ist durchaus möglich, vielleicht sogar wahrscheinlich.

Aber ein Blick in die handschriftliche Überlieferung der *Historia Augusta* zeigt, dass dieser Text in karolingischer Zeit durchaus verbreitet und zugänglich war.²⁰⁴ Die gesamte Überlieferung des Textes basiert auf einer Handschrift: dem Codex Vaticanus Palat. lat. 899 aus dem 9. Jahrhundert (karolingische Minuskel). Von dieser einen Handschrift hängen alle anderen bekannten ab, darunter ein Bambergensis aus dem Ende 9. Jahrhunderts.

Der eben in Anm. 203 zitierte Felix Mundt meinte, dass der (unbekannte) Verfasser der *Historia Augusta* die *Tiburtinische Sibylle* (mit dem *Constans-Vaticinium*) verwendet habe. Aber war es vielleicht anders herum? Der Verfasser/Kompilator der *Tiburtinischen Sibylle* kannte vielleicht die *Historia Augusta*, was angesichts der handschriftlichen Überlieferung seit dem 9. Jahrhundert durchaus möglich ist. Es ist also durchaus möglich, dass der unbekannte Interpolator in karolingischer Zeit die eben genannte Stelle der *Historia Augusta* benutzte, um das von ihm erfundene, aber auf *Pseudo-Methodios* basierende, *Constans-Vaticinium* um die „120 Jahre“ anzureichern. Stimmt dies, entfiel die behandelte Stelle der *Historia Augusta* als Beleg für eine Existenz der Legende vom römischen Endkaiser bereits am Ende des 4. Jahrhunderts.

In diesem Jahrhundert gab es natürlich Juden, doch passt ihre Hervorhebung eher ins 10. Jahrhundert, als man die Juden „als Wegbereiter“ des Antichrist ange-

202 H. Meyer/R. Suntrup, *Lexikon der mittelalterlichen Zahlenbedeutungen* (Münstersche Mittelalterschriften 56), München 1987, 804–807.

203 *Historia Augusta, Römische Kaisergestalten*, übersetzt von E. Hohl, bearbeitet und erläutert von E. Merten, A. Rösger und N. Ziegler. Mit einem Vorwort von J. Straub, II: *Von Maximinus Thrax bis Carinus*, Zürich/München s. a., 231 f. bzw. *Scriptores historiae Augustae*, ed. E. Hohl (editio stereotypa correctior addenda et corrigenda adiecerunt Ch. Samberger et W. Seyfarth), I–II, Leipzig 1971, 197, 15–198, 14, hier 198, 4–8: ..., *ipse victurus annis centum viginti et sine herede moriturus*. ... Zur Stelle siehe aber auch F. Mundt, Die Maske des Christen. Spuren christlicher Literatur in der *Historia Augusta*, in: G. Thome/J. Holzhausen/S. Anzinger (Hg.), *Es hat sich viel ereignet, Gutes wie Böses. Lateinische Geschichtsschreibung der Spät- und Nachantike* (Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 141), Leipzig 2001, 37–56, hier 50–55; hier 53–54 auch zur Parallele in der *Tiburtinischen Sibylle*.

204 Zur handschriftlichen Überlieferung siehe E. Hohl, Beiträge zur Textgeschichte der *Historia Augusta*, *Klio* 13 (1913), 258–288, 387–423 sowie *Scriptores historiae Augustae*, ed. Hohl (wie in der vorhergehenden Anm.), VII–X (praefatio).

sichts der bevorstehenden Jahrtausendwende, ansah, was dann (besonders nach dem Jahr 1000) zu erheblichen Judenverfolgungen führte.²⁰⁵

*In illo tempore surget princeps iniquitatis de tribu Dan, qui vocabitur Antichristus. Hic erit filius perditionis et caput superbie, et magister erroris, plenitudo malicie, qui subvertet orbem et faciet prodigia et signa magna per falsas simulations.*²⁰⁶

Die Herkunft des Antichrist aus Dan ist Allgemeingut.²⁰⁷ Und auch im lateinischen Sprachbereich war sie spätestens seit Ambrosius, Augustin,²⁰⁸ Prosper von Aquitanien, Gregor dem Großen,²⁰⁹ Ambrosius Autpertus²¹⁰ u. a. allgemein bekannt,²¹¹ wie bei Wilhelm Bousset nachgelesen werden kann. In der Regel wird auf Gen. 49,17–18 (*fiat Dan coluber in via ...*) verwiesen.²¹²

Eine angedeutete Gleichsetzung des *filius perditionis* mit dem *antichristus* im lateinischen *Pseudo-Methodios*,²¹³ 2 Thess. 2,3 f. zitierend (*e quis vos seducat ullo modo quoniam nisi venerit discessio primum et revelatus fuerit homo peccati filius perditionis, qui adversatur et extollitur supra omne quod dicitur Deus*), wenn auch mit (wohl Übersetzungsbedingten) Abweichungen, spricht gegen die Annahme von Christopher Bo-

205 Fried, Endzeiterwartung (wie Anm. 42), hier 469; siehe auch die oben in Anm. 42 genannte Literatur.

206 Sib. Tib. ed. Sackur (wie Anm. 10), 185,19–23.

207 Bousset, *Antichrist* (wie Anm. 59), 112–115; C.E. Hill, Antichrist from the Tribe of Dan, *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s., 46 (1995), 99–117; Potestà/Rizzi, *L'anticristo*, I (wie Anm. 3), XXXI–XXXII.

208 Siehe auch W. Geerlings, in: *Augustinus-Lexikon* I (1986/1994), 377 (s.v. Antichristus).

209 Gregorius Magnus, *In Iob*, PL 76, 596D–597B (CPL 1708). Siehe H. Savon, Le Antéchrist chez les oeuvres de Grégoire le Grand, in: J. Fontain/R. Gillet/St. Pellistrandi (Hg.), *Grégoire le Grand*, Paris 1986, 389–405.

210 Ambrosii Autperti *Expositionis in Apocalypsim libri I–V*, in: *Ambrosii Autperti opera*, I, ed. R. Weber (CCCM 27), Turnhout 1975, 421,48–51 (V,11,7); auch in: Potestà/Rizzi, *L'anticristo*, II (wie Anm. 3), 262: *De tribu enim Dan Antichristus docetur nasciturus, ...*

211 Siehe z. B. noch die pseudo-ephrämische Apokalypse (*Scarpsum de dictis sancti Efre[m] ...*) aus dem 7. Jahrhundert, die allerdings nicht mit dem *Constans-Vaticinium* zusammenhing. Siehe die Edition von D. Verhelst, *Scarpsum de dictis Sancti Efre[m] prope fine mundi*, in: R. Lievens/E. van Minngroot/W. Verbeke (Hg.), *Pascua Mediaevalia. Studies voor Prof. Dr. J.M. de Smet* (Mediaevalia Lovanensia, ser. I, 10), Leuven 1983, 518–528, hier 526,88–89; zu diesem Text siehe G.J. Reinink, Pseudo-Methodius and the Pseudo-Ephremian 'Sermo de Fine Mundi', in: R.I.A. Nip/H. van Dijk/E.M.C. van Houts/C.H. Kneepkens/G.A.A. Kortekaas (Hg.), *Media Latinitas. A collection of essays to mark the occasion of the retirement of L.J. Engels* (Instrumenta patristica 27), Steenbrugge/Turnhout 1996, 317–322 (auch in: G.J. Reinink, *Syriac Christianity* [wie Anm. 85], Nr. V); siehe auch G. Kortekaas, The Biblical Quotations in the Pseudo-Ephremian Sermo de fine mundi, in: Nip et al., *Media Latinitas*, 237–244.

212 Zur Antichristexegese dieser Stelle siehe die Ausführungen in *Ps.-Meth. syr.*, trad. Reinink (wie Anm. 86), 74 74 Anm. 5 (zu XIV.6).

213 *Ps.-Meth. gr./lat.*, ed. Aerts/Kortekaas (wie Anm. 108), 129 (Kap. [10],2). Siehe auch Potestà, *L'ultimo messia* (wie Anm. 3), 69–71.

nura,²¹⁴ sie finde sich erst seit dem 8. Jahrhundert (in der überarbeiteten lateinischen Fassung des *Pseudo-Methodios*). Sie taucht z. B. aber bereits bei Hieronymus auf, um nur ein Beispiel aus der lateinischen patristischen Literatur zu nennen, namentlich in seinem Brief an Algasia.²¹⁵ Mithin ist zwar ein Einfluss der *Pseudo-Methodios-Apokalypse* auf das *Constans-Vaticinium* nicht grundsätzlich auszuschließen, angesichts der viel älteren Belege (Hieronymus usw., besonders aber Augustinus²¹⁶) aber auch nicht beweisbar.

*Deludet autem per artem magicam multos, ita ut ignem de celo descendere videatur.*²¹⁷

Auch diese kurze Beschreibung der „Wunder“ des Antichrist entspricht traditionellen Ansichten, die bereits in der patristischen Literatur fassbar sind.²¹⁸

Et minuentur anni sicut menses sicut septimana et septimana sicut dies, et dies sicut hore, [et ora velut puncti].

Auch die „Verkürzung der Tage“ ist ein alter Topos, bekannt seit Laktanz²¹⁹ und vermutlich auf Matth. 24,22 (*et nisi breviati fuissent dies illi, ...*) basierend.

*Et exurgent ab aquilone spurcissime gentes, quas Alexander [rex Indus] inclusit, Gog videlicet et Magog. Hec [autem] sunt XXII regna, quorum numerus [est] sicut arena maris.*²²⁰

Im *Constans-Vaticinium* wird erwähnt, dass der Endzeitkaiser namens „Constans“ nach dem Auftauchen von Gog und Magog²²¹ sein Heer versammelt und diese apoka-

214 Bonura, When did the Legend of the Last Emperor Originate? (wie Anm. 32), 85–86 mit Anm. 165 mit Verweis auf Prinz, Eine frühe abendländische Aktualisierung (wie Anm. 107), 15,209: ... *filius perditionis. quod dicitur antechristus*; siehe auch a.a.O. 16,208. Zu dieser an die Verhältnisse im europäischen 8. Jahrhundert adaptierte Fassung der *Pseudo-Methodios-Apokalypse* (die immerhin, wie Kraft gezeigt hat, einige Bezüge zum *Constans-Vaticinium* aufweist – siehe oben bei Anm. 108–109) siehe Cl. Gantner, Hoffnung in der Apokalypse? Die *Ismaeliten* in den älteren lateinischen Fassungen der *Revelationes* des Pseudo-Methodius, in: V. Wiesner/Ch. Zolles/C. Feik/M. Zolles/L. Schlöndorff (Hg.), *Abendländische Apokalyptik. Kompendium zur Genealogie der Endzeit* (Kulturgeschichte der Apokalyptik 1), Berlin 2013, 521–548.

215 Hier zitiert nach Potestà/Rizzi, *L'anticristo*, II (wie Anm. 3), 16/18 (..., *tunc sciant Antichristum, id est hominem peccati et filium perditionis, ...*). Insofern ist die Kritik von Shoemaker, *Apocalypse of Empire* (wie Anm. 24), 193 Anm. 52 berechtigt. Und auch Bonuras Verweis (a.a.O.) auf Potestà, *The Vaticinium of Constans* (wie Anm. 3), 288 bzw. auf Potestà, *L'ultimo messia* (wie Anm. 3), 51–53, geht in die Irre.

216 W. Geerlings, *Augustinus-Lexikon I* (1986/1994), 377.

217 *Sib. Tib.* ed. Sackur (wie Anm. 10), 185,23–24.

218 Siehe nur Bousset, *Antichrist* (wie Anm. 59), 115–124 mit den entsprechenden Nachweisen.

219 Bousset, *Antichrist* (wie Anm. 59), 143–144.

220 *Sib. Tib.* ed. Sackur (wie Anm. 10), 185,24–186,1;

221 Zu diesen apokalyptischen Völkern und ihrer Rolle in den eschatologischen Vorstellungen siehe grundlegend A.R. Anderson, Alexander and the Caspian Gates, *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 59 (1928), 130–163; A.R. Anderson, *Alexander's Gate, Gog and Magog, and the Inclosed Nations* (Monographs of the Medieval Academy of America 5), Cambridge (Mass.) 1932; Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (wie Anm. 39), 185–192; die relevante ältere Literatur findet sich bei

lyptischen Völkerschaften besiegen wird. Während Christopher Bonura²²² die *Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodios* mit ihrer ausführlichen Nennung der 22 zu Gog und Magog gehörenden Völker als Vorlage ansah,²²³ meinte Stephen Shoemaker hier einen weiteren Beweis für eine spätantike Entstehungszeit des *Constans-Vaticiniums* finden zu können.²²⁴ Anzumerken ist in dem Zusammenhang, dass bei *Pseudo-Methodios* die Auflistung der apokalyptischen Völker im Kontext des Alexanderkapitels (Kapitel VIII) erfolgt, während ihr Ausbruch aus den „Toren des Nordens“ und die folgende Beschreibung ihres schrecklichen Verhaltens auf die Beschreibung des Segensreiches unter dem Endzeitkaiser an einer viel späteren Stelle des Apokalypsentextes ausführlich geschildert wird.²²⁵ Es bleibt natürlich die Tatsache, dass im *Constans-Vaticinium* die 22 apokalyptischen Völker nach dem Auftauchen des Antichrist auftauchen und dann vom Endzeitkaiser besiegt werden, während bei *Pseudo-Methodios* erst ein Engel diese Völker vernichtet, dann der Antichrist geoffenbart wird und der Endzeitkaiser schließlich seine Herrschaft (resp. seine Krone) auf Golgatha Gott zurückgibt.²²⁶ Geht man davon aus, dass der Kompilator des *Constans-Vaticiniums* nicht einfach die *Pseudo-Methodios-Apokalypse* ausschrieb, sondern vorhandene apokalyptische Elemente (die letztlich auf *Pseudo-Methodios* zurückgingen) so arrangierte, dass die Person des Endzeitkaisers nuancierter erscheint, ergibt sich ein wirklicher Widerspruch. Aber auch diese Passage ist m. E. nicht geeignet, um zu beweisen, dass das *Constans-Vaticinium* älter als *Pseudo-Methodios* war.

Stephen Shoemaker verwies auf die wohl älteste Version des Alexanderromans (des sog. Pseudo-Callisthenes), wo tatsächlich steht, dass Alexander 22 Völker besiegt

Brandes, Gog, Magog und die Hunnen (wie Anm. 92), 477–498; siehe auch die Beiträge in Brandes/Schmiedler/Voß (Hg.), *Peoples of the Apocalypse* (wie Anm. 18); sowie E. van Donzel/A. Schmidt, with a contribution by C. Ott, *Gog and Magog in Early Eastern Christian and Islamic Sources. Sallam's Quest for Alexander's Wall* (Brill's Inner Asian Library 22), Leiden 2010; W. Brandes, Gog & Magog in Byzantium – a Pessimistic Story, in: G. Tamer/L. Greisiger/A. Mein (Hg.), *Gog and Magog. Contributions toward a World History of an Apocalyptic Motif* (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – Tension, Transmission, Transformation 17), Berlin/Boston 2024, 227–242.

222 Bonura, When did the Legend of the Last Emperor Originate? (wie Anm. 32), 81–82 Anm. 146; *Ps.-Meth. syr.*, trad. Reinink (wie Anm. 86), 24–26 (VIII,10).

223 Listen der 22 Völker bei Sackur, *Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen* (wie Anm. 10), 37; Bousset, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Eschatologie (wie Anm. 181), hier 126 ff.; *Die Apokalypse des Ps.-Methodios*, hg. von A. Lolos (Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie 83), Meisenheim am Glan 1976, 152–156.

224 Shoemaker, The Tiburtine Sibyl (wie Anm. 16), 240; Shoemaker, *Apocalypse of Empire* (wie Anm. 24), 58 f. mit gewissen Einschränkungen in Anm. 112 auf S. 198.

225 *Ps.-Meth. syr.*, trad. Reinink (wie Anm. 86), 67–69 (XIII,19–21); vgl. auch A. Schmidt, Die „Brüste des Nordens“ und Alexanders Mauer gegen Gog und Magog, in: Brandes/Schmiedler (Hg.), *Endzeiten* (wie Anm. 18), 89–99.

226 *Ps.-Meth. syr.*, trad. Reinink (wie Anm. 86), 69–72 (XIII,21–XIV,3).

habe (ὑπέταξεν ἔθνη βαρβάρων κβ', ...).²²⁷ Diese Angabe findet sich auch in den frühen anderen Fassungen des Alexanderromans.²²⁸

Der (isolierte) Satz mit den besiegten 22 barbarischen Völkern findet sich ganz am Ende des Romans, unmittelbar vor der Liste der Städtegründungen Alexanders.²²⁹ Grundsätzlich ist ein wichtiger Umstand zu beachten, nämlich, dass „der Alexanderroman als halbliterarisches und dazu anonymes Werk gleichsam vogelfrei (war), und jeder Schreiber konnte ihn nach Gutdünken verändern.“²³⁰ Der Ort im Text, an dem sich die zitierte Passage (und zwar in fast allen Varianten desselben) findet, erweckt den Eindruck einer späteren Hinzufügung.

Die Angabe der 22 barbarischen Völker findet sich auch in der armenischen Übersetzung des Alexanderromans.²³¹ Sie entstand angeblich ca. 480 auf der Basis des ältesten Textes (α), also des von Wilhelm Kroll edierten Textes, benutzte aber auch eine Handschrift der jüngeren Version β.²³² In dieser Rezension taucht die fragliche Mitteilung ebenfalls auf (und zwar ebenfalls ganz am Ende): ὑπέταξεν δὲ ἔθνη βαρβάρων κβ' (es folgt die Feststellung, dass er auch 14 Hellenenstämme unterworfen habe).²³³ Auch die syrische Übersetzung hat diese dürre Mitteilung.²³⁴ Auch die spätantike lateinische

227 *Historia Alexandri Magni (Pseudo-Callisthenes)*, I: *recensio vestusta*, ed. G. Kroll, Berlin 1926 (Nachdruck Hildesheim 1977), 146,2.

228 Eine bequeme Übersicht über die sehr komplizierten Verhältnisse der verschiedenen Fassungen des Alexanderromans findet sich bei R. Stoneman, *Primary Sources from the Classical and Early Medieval Periods*, in: Z.D. Zuwiyya (Hg.), *A Companion to Alexander Literature in the Middle Ages* (Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 29), Leiden/Boston 2011, 1–20; immer mit R. Merkelbach/J. Trümpf, *Die Quellen des griechischen Alexanderromans* (Zetemata 9), München 1977, zu vergleichen.

229 Alle Details zu finden bei Merkelbach/Trümpf, *Quellen* (wie Anm. 228), 153–154.

230 So H. van Thiel, *Leben und Taten Alexanders von Makedonien. Der griechische Alexanderroman nach der Handschrift L* (Texte zur Forschung 13), Darmstadt 1974, XXXVII.

231 *The Romance of Alexander the Great by Pseudo-Callisthenes*. Translated from the Armenian Version with an Introduction by A. M. Wolohojian, New York/London 1969, 158: „He conquered many nations, twenty-two barbarian and twelve Greek“; *Ἱστορία Ἀλεξάνδρου*. Die armenische Übersetzung der sagenhaften Alexander-Biographie (Pseudo-Callisthenes) auf ihre mutmaßliche Grundlage zurückgeführt von R. Raabe, Leipzig 1896, 107: ὑπέταξε πολλὰ ἔθνη, βαρβάρων εἰκοσι δύο ... Vgl. Stoneman, *Primary Sources* (wie Anm. 228), 5 f.

232 S.M. Lombardi/G. Ulohogia, *Due redazioni per il Romanzo d'Alessandro armeno: Tessere di un mosaico perduta*, in: R.B. Finazzi/A. Valvo (Hg.), *La diffusione dell'eredità classica nell'età tardo antica e medievale. Il "Romanzo d'Alessandro" e altri scritti* (L'eredità classica nel mondo orientale 2), Alessandria 1998, 157–174. Version β: *Der griechische Alexanderroman Rezension β*, hg. von L. Bergson (Studia Graeca Stockholmensia 3), Stockholm/Göteborg/Uppsala 1965, 190 (III.35) ὑπέταξε δὲ βαρβάρων ἔθνη κβ', ... Vgl. Stoneman, *Primary Sources* (wie Anm. 228), 6.

233 Ich zitiere nach van Thiel, *Leben und Taten Alexanders* (wie Anm. 230), 166,10.

234 Budge, *The History of Alexander the Great* (wie Anm. 89), 142: „He subdued the barbarians twenty-two kings, ...“.

Übersetzung des Julius Valerius²³⁵ sowie die aus dem 10. Jahrhundert stammende Übersetzung des Archipresbyters Leo²³⁶ bieten diese Information – aber auch nicht mehr.

Es fällt auf, dass das *Constans-Vaticinium* Gog und Magog nur 22 *regna* zuordnet, ohne weitere Angaben zu machen, Angaben, die sich etwa bei *Pseudo-Methodios* finden. Auch werden die Namen dieser 22 *regna*²³⁷ nicht genannt. Somit ergibt sich logischerweise die Möglichkeit, dass der Verfasser/Interpolator des *Vaticiniums* diese Information aus einer anderen Quelle bezog. Der Hinweis von Stephen Shoemaker auf den Alexanderroman ist mithin unsinnig.

*Cum autem audierit rex Romanorum, convocato exercitu debellabit eos atque prosternet usque ad internicionem et postea veniet Ierusalem, et ibi deposito capitis diademate et omni habitu regali relinquet regnum christianorum Deo patri et Iesu Christo filio eius.*²³⁸

Ein immer wieder vorgebrachtes Argument für eine spätantike Entstehungszeit des *Constans-Vaticiniums* ist das *diadem*, das der Endzeitherrscher in Jerusalem an Gott zurückgibt (..., *et postea veniet Ierusalem, et ibi deposito capitis diademate et omni habitu regali* ...).²³⁹ Schon Ernst Sackur – und ihm folgend verschiedene Gelehrte²⁴⁰ – legten großen Wert auf diese Angabe, dass der Endzeitkaiser eben sein *diadema* in Jerusalem niederlegte. Man sah in dieser Wortwahl (Sackur folgend) einen sicheren Hinweis auf das 4. Jahrhundert. „This detail seemingly reflects the costum of the late ancient emperors who wore on their heads a diadem, ..., as opposed to the medieval Latin kings who instead favored crowns.“²⁴¹ Bereits Hannes Möhring hatte dies entschieden behauptet.²⁴² Doch lässt sich diese Behauptung wirklich aufrechterhalten? Nach meiner Meinung ist dies keinesfalls möglich und bezeugt nur methodische Defizite!

²³⁵ *Iulius Valerius, Res gestae Alexandri Macedonis, translatae ex Aesopo Graeco*, ed. M. Rosellini, Berlin/Boston 2004 (ed. corr. cum addendis 2012), 186,1442 f. (III,35): *gentes barbaras dicioni suae subiecit numero viginti et duas, ...*; die Epitome dieser Schrift kennt nur 12 Städtegründungen (auf den Namen Alexandria) Alexanders des Großen: *Julii Valerii Epitome*, zum erstenmal herausgegeben von J. Zacher, Halle 1867, 63,14: *condiditque urbes duodecim*. Siehe jetzt H. Wulfram (Hg.), *Der lateinische Alexanderroman* des Iulius Valerius (Millennium-Studien 101), Berlin/Boston 2023.

²³⁶ *Der Alexanderroman des Archipresbyter Leo*, untersucht und herausgegeben von F. Pfister (Sammlung mittellateinischer Texte 6), Heidelberg 1913, 130,18–19 ... *subiugans sibi gentes barbarorum viginti septem* (sic!), was wohl einen überlieferungsbedingten Fehler darstellt. Die Edition nach einer anderen Handschrift durch D.J.A. Ross, *A New Manuscript of Archpriest Leo of Naples. Nativitas et victoria Alexandri Magni, Classica et Mediaevalia* 20 (1959), 98–158 (Text: 102–158) bricht leider vor der hier interessierenden Stelle ab. Vgl. Stoneman, *Primary Sources* (wie Anm. 228), 17.

²³⁷ Siehe oben Anm. 221.

²³⁸ *Sib. Tib.* ed. Sackur (wie Anm. 10), 186,4–9.

²³⁹ *Sib. Tib.* ed. Sackur (wie Anm. 10), 186,5–6.

²⁴⁰ Sackur, *Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen* (wie Anm. 10), 167 f.; Möhring, *Weltkaiser der Endzeit* (wie Anm. 4), 42; Shoemaker, *The Tiburtine Sibyl* (wie Anm. 16), hier 233 (mit Anm. 51).

²⁴¹ So Shoemaker a.a.O.

²⁴² Möhring, *Weltkaiser der Endzeit* (wie Anm. 4), 42 mit Anm. 212.

Bereits Christopher Bonura widersprach dieser Unterstellung,²⁴³ wobei er (richtig) auf zwei Texte (*Reversio Sanctae Crucis* und *Sermo de exaltatione Sanctae Crucis*) verwies, die Stephan Borgehammar vor einigen Jahren edierte und ausführlich untersuchte.²⁴⁴ Sie stammen aus dem Ende des 7. und der Mitte des 8. Jahrhunderts und gehören in einen liturgischen Kontext.²⁴⁵ Inhaltlich geht es um die im (lateinischen) Mittelalter sehr verbreitete Geschichte, nach der Kaiser Herakleios im Jahre 629 oder 630 das Heilige Kreuz – nach seinem Sieg über die sassanidischen Perser 628 – zurück nach Jerusalem brachte.²⁴⁶ Als er – in vollem Ornat (in Purpur und mit Diadem) die Stadt betreten wollte, verwehrte ein Engel ihm den Einzug und verwies darauf, dass Christus, als er nach Jerusalem kam, eben nicht in Purpur und mit Diadem, auf einem Pferd erschien, sondern auf einem Esel und in aller Bescheidenheit.²⁴⁷ Diese (eigentlich recht späte) Schilderung hat viele Gelehrte dazu verleitet, in den Vorgängen des Jahres 629 oder 630²⁴⁸ in Jerusalem ein Zeichen dafür zu sehen, dass hier die Vorstellung vom Endzeitkaiser zu Tage trete.²⁴⁹ Und doch sollte man Zweifel hegen. Eventuelle eschatologische Stimmungen, die angesichts der Ereignisse vor 628 (Krieg mit den Persern) und dann seit den 630er Jahren (islamische Expansion und Okkupation) aus heutiger Sicht sehr verständlich erscheinen, mag es gegeben haben, aber doch nicht als ein „Massenphänomen“. Tatsächlich gibt es Hinweise darauf, dass nach dem grandiosen Sieg des Herakleios über die sassanidischen Perser (628) und der Rückführung des Heiligen Kreuzes der Kaiser und seine führenden Regierungsmitarbeiter alles daran setzten, um den *status quo ante* (scil. der Zustände vor den Perserkriegen) der zivilen und militärischen Strukturen wiederherzustellen.²⁵⁰ Die bald einsetzende arabische Eroberung der wichtigen Ostprovinzen des Reiches – eine Folge der Schlacht

243 Bonura, When did the Legend of the Emperor Originate? (wie Anm. 32), bes. 82–85.

244 Borgehammar, Heraclius Learns Humility (wie Anm. 113).

245 Borgehammar, Heraclius Learns Humility (wie Anm. 113), 148–160 zur Datierung.

246 Siehe oben Anm. 4; zur Bedeutung des Heiligen Kreuzes siehe auch die umfassende Monographie von H. Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das „wahre“ Kreuz Die Geschichte einer Reliquie und ihrer künstlerischen Fassung in Byzanz und im Abendland* (Spätantike - frühes Christentum - Byzanz: Reihe B, Studien und Perspektiven, 17), Wiesbaden 2004.

247 *Reversio sanctae crucis*, ed. Borgehammar (wie Anm. 113), 186 (Kap. 16 [18]): ..., *non se purpuratum nec diademate nitentem exhibuit* ... bzw. *Sermo de exaltatione Sanctae Crucis*; 198 (Kap. 17 [15]): ... *sed cum diadema regni* ...

248 Zur Datierung siehe oben Anm. 5.

249 So z. B. Y. Stoyanov, *Defenders and Enemies of the True Cross. The Sasanian Conquest of Jerusalem in 614 and the Byzantine Ideology of Anti-Persian Warfare* (Sitzungsberichte der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Klasse 819), Wien 2011 mit der älteren Literatur; Shoemaker, *Apocalypse of Empire* (wie Anm. 24), 75–76; Greisiger, *Messias* (wie Anm. 6), 172–180, u. v. a. m. Ich halte dies für falsch.

250 Zur Zivilverwaltung siehe die Angaben bei Brandes, *Finanzverwaltung in Krisenzeiten* (wie Anm. 18), 22–23, 34, 38 und bes. 459 f.; zu den „Rekonstruktionen“ der militärischen Strukturen siehe O. Schmitt, *Untersuchungen zur Organisation und zur militärischen Stärke oströmischer Herrschaft im Vorderen Orient zwischen 628 und 633*, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 94 (2001), 197–229.

bei Yarmūk – allerdings konterkarierte alle diese Bemühungen. Aber sicher scheint zu sein, dass zumindest die politisch führenden Kreise (mit dem Kaiser an der Spitze) keineswegs ein „eschatologisch kontaminiertes“ Verhalten zeigten – eher war das Gegenteil der Fall!

Zurück zu der zu besprechenden Passage des *Constans-Vaticiniums*: Auch Gian Luca Potestà meinte völlig zutreffend, dass allein der Gebrauch des Wortes *diadema* keineswegs eine sichere Zuweisung der entsprechenden Passage in die Spätantike rechtfertigt.²⁵¹

Geht man allerdings von einem lateinischen Ursprung des *Constans-Vaticiniums* aus (frühestens im 9. Jahrhundert), löst sich auch das angebliche oder vermeintliche Problem mit dem *diadema* sehr schnell in Wohlgefallen auf, wie ein Blick in das „Mittelateinische Wörterbuch“ zweifelsfrei zeigt.²⁵² Hier seien nur einige aussagekräftige Beispiele genannt. In Einhards *Vita Caroli Magni* (Kap. XXIII) kann man lesen:

*In festivitibus veste auro texta et calciamentis gemmatis et fibula aurea sagum adstringente, diademate quoque ex auro et gemmis ornatus incedebat. Aliis autem diebus habitus eius parum a communi ac plebeio abhorrebat.*²⁵³

Oder bei Widukind von Corvey: *Regi autem Hluthowico non erat filius, omnisque populus Francorum atque Saxonum quaerebat Oddoni diadema inponere regni.*²⁵⁴ Diese Aufzählung ließe sich lange fortsetzen.²⁵⁵ Bemerkenswert, da aus dem 9. Jahrhundert stammend und in Bezug auf die karolingischen Kaiser (Karl und Ludwig der Frommen bzw. dessen Sohn Lothar) aufweisend, sind etwa Notker Balbulus (*Gesta Karoli Magni*)²⁵⁶ oder der sog. Astronomus.²⁵⁷ Auch die *Annales regni Francorum* sind in diesem Zusammenhang zu nennen.²⁵⁸

251 Potestà, *The Vaticinium of Constans* (wie Anm. 3), 287.

252 *Mittelateinisches Wörterbuch* III (2007), sp. 667–559 (s.v. *diadema*) mit einer Vielzahl von Belegen seit dem 7. Jahrhundert und aus karolingischer Zeit.

253 *Einhardi Vita Karoli Magni*, post G. Pertz rec. G. Waitz, editio sexta cur. O. Holder-Egger (*Scriptores rerum Germanicarum* 25), Leipzig/Berlin 1911, 28,12–15 (vgl. aber auch den app. crit.); vgl. u. a. W. Wendling, Die Erhebung Ludwigs d. Fr. zum Mitkaiser im Jahre 813 und ihre Bedeutung für die Verfassungsgeschichte des Frankenreiches, *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 19 (1985), 201–238, hier 226; zur gesamten Problematik ist immer noch lesenswert C. Brühl, Kronen- und Krönungsbrauch im frühen und hohen Mittelalter, *Historische Zeitschrift* 234 (1982), 1–31.

254 *Widukindi Monachi Corbeiensis rerum gestarum Saxonicarum libri tres*, editio quinta post G. Waitz et K.A. Kehr recognovit P. Hirsch adiuvante H.-E. Lohmann (*Scriptores rerum Germanicarum* 60), Hannover 1935, 26; daneben siehe auch S. 39, 42, 65, 78, 92.

255 Ein Blick in die digitale MGH kann jeden diesbezüglichen Zweifel ausräumen.

256 *Notker der Stammler, Taten Kaiser Karls des Großen*, hg. von K.F. Haefele (*Scriptores rerum Germanicarum*, N.F., 12), Berlin 1959, 71,4.

257 *Theganus, Gesta Hludowici imperatoris - Astronomus, Vita Hludowici imperatoris*, hg. und übersetzt von E. Tremp (*Scriptores rerum Germanicarum* 64), Hannover 1995, 414,10.

258 *Annales Regni Francorum inde ab a. 741 usque ad a. 829, qui dicuntur Annales Laurissenses maiores et Einhardi*, post. ed. G. H. Pertzii recogn. F. Kurze (*Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum schol-*

Es ist also spätestens seit dem 8. Jahrhundert völlig normal, dass *diadema* benutzt wird, um die Herrscherkrone zu bezeichnen. Dass auch *corona* gebraucht wurde, widerspricht dem nicht.²⁵⁹

Festzuhalten ist also, dass das Aufscheinen des Begriffs *diadema* im *Constans-Vaticinium* keineswegs als ein „Beweis“ (wie etwa Stephen Shoemaker insinuiert) dafür anzusehen ist, dass dieses aus der Spätantike stammt. Ganz im Gegenteil: Es handelt sich eher um ein (starkes) Indiz für eine Entstehung in karolingischer Zeit (ob in Rom oder in Italien sei dahingestellt)!

*Et cum cessaverit imperium Romanum, tunc revalibitur manifeste Antichristus et sedebit in domo Domini in Ierusalem.*²⁶⁰

Das Motiv des „Sitzens im Tempel“ des Antichrist hat bereits Wilhelm Bousset ausführlich behandelt. Es ist alt und war sehr verbreitet. Grundlage stellte 2 Thess. 2,4 (... *ut in templo Dei sedeat ostendens se tamquam sit Deus*) dar. Auf Bousset sei in diesem Zusammenhang grundsätzlich verwiesen.²⁶¹

*Regnante eutem eo, egridientur duo clarissimi viri Helias et Enoch ad annuntiandum Domini adventum et Antichristus occident eos, et post dies tres a Domino resuscitabuntur. Tunc erit persecutio magna, qualis non fuit antea nec postea subsequetur.*²⁶²

Die beiden Propheten – Henoch und Elias – spielen eine bedeutende Rolle in der spätantiken (patristischen) und mittelalterlichen Literatur,²⁶³ wie auch in der Liturgie.²⁶⁴ Seit Irenaeus, Hippolytos oder Tertullian zählt diese Episode zum Kernbestand der Vorstellungen vom endzeitlichen Szenario.²⁶⁵ Sie geht auf Offb. 11,3–14 zurück, eine

arum separatim editi 6), Hannover 1895, 139 (ad a. 813): Kaiser Michael I. resignierte und ... *deposito diademate efficitur* ... wurde er Mönch; 144 (ad a. 816): Papst Stephan trifft Ludwig den Frommen in Reims und ... *eum diadematis inpositione coronavit* ...; vgl. Wendling, Zur Erhebung Ludwigs d. Fr. (wie Anm. 253), 204 f.

²⁵⁹ Auch Adso benutzte diesen Begriff: *Adso Dervensis de ortu et tempore Antichristi*, ed. D. Verhelst (CCCM 45), Turnhout 1976, 47,130.

²⁶⁰ *Sib. Tib.* ed. Sackur (wie Anm. 10), 186,9–11.

²⁶¹ Bousset, *Antichrist* (wie Anm. 59), 104–108. Nur ein Beispiel sei genannt: *Sancti Ambrosii opera*, IV: *Explanatio psalmorum XII*, rec. M. Petschenig, editio alter supplementis aucta curante M. Zelzer (CSEL 64), Wien 1999, 246, 15–17 (*explanatio psalmi* 40,25). Siehe Bonura, When did the Legend of the Last Emperor Originate? (wie Anm. 32), 85–86 zu einem Vergleich mit *Pseudo-Methodios*; dagegen Shoemaker, *Apocalypse of Empire* (wie Anm. 24), 193 Anm. 52.

²⁶² *Sib. Tib.* ed. Sackur (wie Anm. 10), 186,11–15.

²⁶³ Ein umfassender Überblick (wenn auch ohne die apokalyptische Literatur, um die es in diesem Aufsatz geht) bei E. Poirot, *Les prophètes Élie et Élisée dans la littérature chrétienne ancienne*, Turnhout 1997; siehe bes. Bousset, *Antichrist* (wie Anm. 59), 134–139.

²⁶⁴ E. Poirot, *Le glorieux prophète Élie dans la liturgie byzantine*, Bégrolle en Mauges 2004.

²⁶⁵ Bousset, *Antichrist* (wie Anm. 59), 136: „Die Anschauung, dass Elias und Henoch die beiden Zeugen der Endzeit sind, ist so weit verbreitet, dass es überflüssig ist, die weiteren Zeugnisse aufzuzählen.“

der wenigen Stellen, die hier an die Johannes-Offenbarung gemahnt.²⁶⁶ Natürlich taucht sie auch im den griechischen und lateinischen (nicht jedoch in der syrischen) Fassungen der *Pseudo-Methodios-Apokalypse* auf.²⁶⁷

*Adbreviabit autem dominus dies illos propter electos et occidetur virtute Domini Antichristus a Michaelae arcangelo in monte Oliveti.*²⁶⁸

Bereits Offb. 12,7 berichtet, dass Michael gegen den Drachen (Belial, der „Teufel“) kämpfen werde (*et factum est proelium mahnum in coelo: Michael, et angeli eius proeliabantur eum dracone, et draco pugnabat, et angeli eius, ...*). Der Erzengel Michael als Besieger des Antichrist (des Teufels)²⁶⁹ findet sich (u. a.) bei Gregor dem Großen²⁷⁰ oder bei Hieronymus, der in seinem Danielkommentar den Ölberg als den Ort bezeichnete, wo der Antichrist besiegt werden wird.²⁷¹ Und Michael als Drachentöter ist bis heute allgemein präsent. In dem (für die eschatologischen Vorstellungen des lateinischen Mittelalters wichtigen) Kommentar des Haymo von Auxerre (den man früher mit Haymo von Halberstadt verwechselte²⁷²) zum 2. Thessalonicherbrief taucht diese Vorstellung in der Mitte des 9. Jahrhunderts ebenfalls auf.²⁷³ Und auch Beda Venera-

266 Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (wie Anm. 39), bes. 211–215.

267 *Ps.-Meth. gr./lat.* ed. Aerts/Kortekaas (wie Anm. 108), 194/195 ([14],11); zum Problem der Abweichung des griechisch/lateinischen vom syrischen Text, siehe den Kommentar von Aerts *Ps.-Meth. gr./lat.* ed. Aerts/Kortekaas II (wie Anm. 108), 59.

268 *Sib. Tib.* ed. Sackur (wie Anm. 10), 186,15–17.

269 Vgl. Bousset, *Antichrist* (wie Anm. 59), 152; siehe auch K. Berger, *Die Apokalypse des Johannes. Kommentar*, II: *Apk 11–22*, Freiburg etc. 2017, 858–865; O. Böcher, *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* XXXIII (2002), 121; L. Strack/P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, III: *Die Briefe des Neuen Testaments und die Offenbarung Johannis*, München ⁹1994, 813–814.

270 Gregorius Magnus, *Homiliae XL in Evangelia*. PL 76, 1251A/B (hom. 34,9); *CPL* 1711; S. Gregorii *Magni Moralia in Iob*, libri XXIII–XXXV, cura et studio M. Adriaen (CCSL 143B), Turnhout 1985, 1650 (32,15,27); *CPL* 1708.

271 S. Hieronymi *presbyteri commentariorum in Daniele libri III <IV>*, cura et studio F. Glorie (CCSL 75 A), Turnhout 1964, 933–934 (XI,44/45); *CPL* 588.

272 Zu ihm siehe B. Gansweidt, *Lexikon des Mittelalters* IV (1989), 1864.

273 Haymo Halberstatensis *Expositio in D. Pauli epistolas. In epistolam II ad Thessalonicenses*. PL 117, 781B/C: *Subaudis cum ablata fuerit potestas a Romano imperio, revelabitur, sive manifestabitur ille iniquus, Antichristus, quem Dominus Jesus interficiet spiritu oris sui, sive Dominus Jesus interfecerit illum potentia iussionis suae, sive Michael interfecerit eum, virtute Domini Jesu occidetur, non virtute Michaelis. Occidetur autem (sicut doctores tradunt) in monte Oliveti in Babylone et solio suo, illo in loco contra quem Dominus ascendit in coelos*. Siehe auch Potestà/Rizzi, *L'anticristo* (wie Anm. 3), II, 288. Zum Problem der *doctores* (das insbesondere wegen der berühmten Stelle im Prolog von Adso's Schrift über den Antichrist debattiert wurde - *Adso* [Verhelst] [wie Anm. 259], 26,117 und 29,184) siehe etwa R. Konrad, *De ortu et tempore Antichristi. Antichristvorstellung und Geschichtsbild des Abtes Adso von Montier-en-Der* (Münchener historische Studien; Abteilung mittelalterliche Geschichte, 1), Kallmünz 1964, 36–37; Fried, *Endzeiterwartung* (wie Anm. 42), hier 466–467.

bils vertrat diese Meinung.²⁷⁴ Die Liste ließe sich leicht fortsetzen. Man kann also von Allgemeinwissen sprechen. Dieser Unterschied zu *Pseudo-Methodios*, wo es Christus bzw. Gott selbst ist, der den Antichrist tötet,²⁷⁵ kann also keine Relevanz haben. Hier hatte natürlich die einflussreiche Stelle 2 Thess. 2,8 (*Et tunc revelabitur ille iniquus, quem Dominus Iesus interficiet spiritu oris sui*) Priorität.

Auch der Ölberg als der Ort, wo der Antichrist getötet werden wird, ist umfänglich in der (lateinischen) patristischen Literatur oder in Schriften aus karolingischer Zeit bezeugt; es sei hier nur auf Hieronymus (in seinem Danielkommentar)²⁷⁶ oder, um ein prominentes Beispiel aus dem 9. Jahrhundert zu nennen, auf Hinkmar von Reims verwiesen.²⁷⁷ Auch bei Haymo von Auxerre²⁷⁸ taucht die Szene auf.

Schlussbemerkung

Die Beeinflussung (zumindest partiell) des Qurʾān bzw. des Propheten Muḥammad durch eschatologische Schriften syrisch-christlicher Provenienz steht außer Frage. Insbesondere die *syrische Alexanderlegende*²⁷⁹ ist zu nennen, bildet sie doch in eindeutiger Weise die Vorlage für die Sure 18 und die da berichtete Geschichte von Dhū al-Qarnayn (dem „Zweigehörnten“).²⁸⁰ Doch auch dieser beeindruckende Umstand ist kein Beweis für eine Kenntnis des Propheten vom (typisch byzantinischen) Konzept des Endzeitkaisers. Allein aus chronologischen Gründen ist dies unmöglich, denn alle Versuche (von Stephen Shoemaker) Belege dafür zu finden, dass die Vorstellung in seiner ausgebildeten Form bereits vor Muḥammad existent gewesen sei und somit als Quelle für endzeitliches Denken der ersten Muslime in Frage kommt, müssen als ge-

274 *De temporum ratione liber*, ed. Ch.W. Jones, in: *Bedae Venerabilis opera*, IV/2: *Opera didascalica* (CCSL 123B), Turnhout 1977, LXVIII,40–42 (p. 539; c. 69: *De Temporibus Antichristi*): *Percusso autem illo perditionis filio siue ab ipso domino siue Michaele archangelo, ut quidam docent, et aeterna ultione damnato, ...* (= Potestà/Rizzi, *L'anticristo* [wie Anm. 3], II, 250); CPL 2320.

275 *Ps.-Meth. gr./lat.* (Aerts/Kortekaas) (wie Anm. 108), 196/197 ([14]13).

276 *S. Hieronymi presbyteri Commentariorum in Daniele libri III < IV >*, ed. F. Glorie, in: *S. Hieronymi presbyteri opera*, I/5: *Opera exegetica* (CCSL 75A), Turnhout 1964, 933 (XI. 44/45,433–435): *... denique, inde se rigens usque ad montem Oliueti, Hierosolymorum region ascenditur; ...* (= Potestà/Rizzi, *L'anticristo* [wie Anm. 3], II, 46); CPL 588.

277 Hinkmar von Reims, *De praedestinatione Dei et libero arbitrio*. PL 125, 55–474, hier 461D–462A: *Sanctusque Hieronymus in Danielis commento Isaiae vaticinio firmat, quia Antichristus usque ad summitatem montis Oliveti veniet, et ibi peribit.*

278 Wie eben in Anm. 273 zitiert

279 Zu dieser siehe oben Anm. 89–94.

280 K. van Bladel, *The Alexander Legend in the Qurʾān 18:83–102*, in: G.S. Reynolds (Hg.), *The Qurʾān in its Historical Context*, London/New York 2008, 175–203; T. Tesei, *The Prophecy of Dhū-l-Qarnayn (Q 18:83–102) and the Origins of the Qurʾānic Corpus*, *Miscellanea Arabica* 2013/2014, 273–290; Shoemaker, *Apocalypse of Empire* (wie Anm. 23), 83.

scheitert angesehen werden. Die *Pseudo-Methodios-Apokalypse*, deren Entstehung eindeutig ins Jahr 692 (vielleicht Ende 691) zu setzen ist,²⁸¹ bleibt der erste sichere Text, in dem sich der Endzeitkaiser findet.

Insbesondere die Versuche, das *Constans-Vaticinium* der *Sibylla Tiburtina* (um 1000!) in die Zeit vor der ersten Hälfte des 7. Jahrhunderts zu datieren (oder gar ins 4. Jahrhundert!), ist als gescheitert anzusehen. Wenn die in diesem Artikel vorgetragenen Argumente richtig sein sollten, entstand das *Vaticinium* in karolingischer Zeit (wohl im 9. Jahrhundert, vielleicht sogar erst im 10.) und basiert (eher indirekt) auf der lateinischen Übersetzung der *Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodios*, auf diversen patristischen Autoren (Hieronymus, Gregor der Große u. a.) und besonders auf relevanten Bibelstellen.²⁸² Diese Vorstellungen (Bibel und Kirchenväter) hatten für den Kompilator des *Constans-Vaticiniums* wohl eine größere Relevanz als der Text des *Pseudo-Methodios*, was erklärt, dass er nicht in jedem Detail sklavisch dem lateinischen Text der *Pseudo-Methodios-Apokalypse* folgte.²⁸³ Außerdem deuten bestimmte *termini technici* (*diadema*, *denarius*, *paganus*) auf das 9. (vielleicht auch das 10.) Jahrhundert.

Es bleibt dem unbekannten Verfasser der Apokalypse, die unter dem Namen des Kirchenvaters Methodios in Umlauf gebracht wurde, am Ende des 7. Jahrhunderts das „Verdienst“, den christlichen Endzeitkaiser, basierend auf ältere (vor allem syrischen) Quellen basierend, „erfunden“ zu haben. Und den Propheten Muḥammad mit dieser wirkmächtigen Figur in Verbindung zu bringen, ist nicht möglich. Obwohl in der Spätantike und im frühen Mittelalter immer wieder Situationen eintraten, die ein Denken an die unmittelbar bevorstehende Endzeit evozierten, darf man diesen zweifelsfreien Umstand nicht übertreiben und die „reale“ Geschichte, die ihren „normalen“ Verlauf nahm, quasi ausblenden.²⁸⁴ Das „normale“ Verhalten der Menschen entsprach wohl dem, was der byzantinische Historiker (und Augenzeuge) Agathias über die Folgen eines schweren Erdbebens im Jahre 557 in Konstantinopel, bei dem sogar Teile der Kuppel der Hagia Sophia einstürzten, berichtete. Zunächst brach eine Massenhysterie aus und alle Welt rechnete fest mit dem unmittelbar bevorstehenden Ende. Alle Gesellschaftsschichten verhielten sich plötzlich im höchsten Sinne moralisch, reiche Spenden gingen an die Kirchen, Reiche sorgten sich um Arme, korrupte Beamte wurden plötzlich gesetzestreu usw., aber dann kam recht schnell die Rückkehr zur Normalität: „But all this was limited to that fixed space of time in which the terror was

281 Siehe oben Anm. 88.

282 In diesem Sinne z. B. auch McGinn, *Oracular Transformations* (wie Anm. 39), 613 mit Anm. 26.

283 Die von Shoemaker in den Vordergrund gezogenen Unterschiede zwischen Details des *Constans-Vaticiniums* und der *Pseudo-Methodios-Apokalypse* lassen sich so erklären und erweisen sich als nicht wirklich relevant.

284 Dies ist mein hauptsächlicher Vorwurf gegenüber Shoemaker.

endemic. As soon as there was some respite and relief from danger, most people reverted to their normal ways.²⁸⁵

Abkürzungen

BHG	<i>Bibliotheca hagiographica graeca</i> (Subs. hag. 8a), 3. Aufl., Brüssel 1957; F. Halkin, <i>Novum auctarium Bibliothecae hagiographicae graecae</i> (Subs. hag. 65), Brüssel 1984
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina
CCCM	Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis
CSCO	Corpus scriptorium christianorum Orientalium
CANT	<i>Clavis apocryphum Novi Testamenti</i> , cura et studio M. Geerard (CC). Turnhout 1992
CAVT	<i>Clavis apocryphum Veteris Testamenti</i> , cura et studio J.-C. Haelewyck (CC). Turnhout 1998
CPG	M. Geerard, <i>Clavis patrum Graecorum</i> , I–V. Turnhout 1983–1987; <i>Supplementum</i> , cura et studio M. Geerard/J. Noret. Turnhout 1998; J. Noret, <i>Addenda volumini III</i> (CCSG). Turnhout 2003
CPL	E. Dekkers, <i>Clavis patrum Latinorum</i> (CCSL). Steenbrugge ³ 1995
J ³	<i>Regesta pontificum Romanorum ...</i> edidit Ph. Jaffé, editio tertia ..., ed. N. Herbers et alii, I–III. Göttingen 2016/2017
MGH Epp.	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epistulae</i>
MGH SS	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores</i>
PL	<i>Patrologie cursus completus. Series Latina</i>
PMBZ	<i>Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit. Erste Abteilung (641–867). Nach Vorarbeiten von F. Winkelmann erstellt von R.-J. Lilie/C. Ludwig/Th. Pratsch/I. Rochow, unter Mitarbeit von W. Brandes/J. R. Martindale/B. Zielke. Berlin/New York 1999/2000/2001/2002</i>
RE	Pauly's Real-Encyclopaedie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft, I–XXIV, IA–XA, Suppl. I–XV. Stuttgart 1893/1978

²⁸⁵ *Agathiae Myrinaei historiarum libri quinque*, rec. R. Keydell (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 2), Berlin 1967, 170 (cap. V.6); Übersetzung nach P. Magdalino, *The History of the Future and its Uses: Prophecy, Policy and Propaganda*, in: R. Beaton/Ch. Rouché (Hg.), *The Making of Byzantine History. Studies Dedicated to Donald M. Nicol*, Aldershot 1993, 3–34, hier 6; vgl. auch *Agathias, The Histories*. Translated with an Introduction ... by J.D. Frendo (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 2A), Berlin/New York 1975, 140.

Luise Marion Frenkel

The influence of late antique religious polemical discourse on early Byzantine perceptions of the first Muslim victories

*And while the Church at that time was being troubled thus by emperors and impious priests, Amalek rose up in the desert, smiting us, the people of Christ.*¹

Greek Christian texts contain some of the earliest references to Muslim incursions into the Roman Empire and to life during the first decades under their administration. Stemming from the mid-seventh century or more often from the end of that century, they have been used to describe the resulting ‘traumatized and schizophrenic psychological state of the Byzantine court as a result of the Arab conquests and the factor of Islam’.² This chapter reassesses the reliability of reading them factually, which has made them into proofs of the ‘Arab Conquest’. It questions if, in areas that came under Arab control or which were connected to it by land, water or routes of communication, the peoples and/or the few who would write immediately recognised or soon regarded those in control as a lasting power, characterised by a new faith, which had, moreover, inflicted a defeat on them such as the Greeks on Troy and Rome on Carthage. Texts attributed to Anastasius of Sinai and Maximus the Confessor, and inscriptions from Cyprus corroborate a number of recent academic publications which point to more continuity than upheaval in the gradual and prolonged transition from Roman to Muslim Arab rule. This chapter assesses how the layers of religious polemic shaped the textual production, contributing insights on the changes in the historical

1 The passage is taken from Theophanes *Chronicle* AM 6121/AD 628 (ed. K. de Boor, *Theophanis Chronographia* 1, Leipzig 1883, 332): ‘And while the Church at that time was being troubled thus by emperors and impious priests, Amalek rose up in the desert, smiting us, the people of Christ and there occurred the first terrible downfall of the Roman army, I mean the bloodshed at Gabithas, Hiermouchas, and Dathesmos. After this came the fall of Palestine, Caesarea and Jerusalem, then the Egyptian disaster, followed by the capture of the islands between the continents and of all the Roman territory, by the complete loss of the Roman army and navy at Phoinix, and the devastation of all Christian peoples and land, which did not cease until the persecutor of the Church had been miserably slain in Sicily.’ Translation C.A. Mango/R. Scott, *The chronicle of Theophanes Confessor. Byzantine and Near Eastern history; AD 284–813*, Oxford 1997, 462 (also in ed. M. Maas, *Readings in late antiquity. A sourcebook*, London 2000, 406).

2 See D.J. Sahas, The Demonizing Force of the Arab Conquests: The Case of Maximus (ca 580–662) as a Political “Confessor”, *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 53 (2003), 97–116, 116 or the ‘awareness of the unravelling and fragmentation of the empire’ 167, which can, however, be compared to sixth-century historiography, on which see M. Meier, Attila, ἐκ τοῦ γένους τῶν Γηπέδων. Literarische Beziehungen zwischen Johannes Malalas und Prokop?, in: U. Heil/J. Ulrich (eds), *Kirche und Kaiser in Antike und Spätantike* (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 136), Berlin/Boston 2017, 337–352, 337–338.

representation of the perception of this ‘other’ and the extent to which the polemical rhetoric of Christian conflicts affected the historical representation of seventh-century political and cultural developments in North Africa and the Near East.

Most scholarship has focused on the Roman institutional point of view or, more recently, on that of the peoples of areas which (eventually) came under Arab rule.³ Especially in the last decades, research on the early Muslim/Arab perspective which approaches textual and archaeological material in tandem and moves across traditional borders of subject and geography has grown and yielded much information about pre-Islamic and early-Islamic contexts. However, these results continue to be challenged by positivistic readings of the texts, especially those of religious character, accepting claims of authorial sincerity and acumen or the truth of personal traits. For example. Misinterpreting late antique and medieval technologies of development and circulation of knowledge, especially in regard to quotations and references, allows for monolithic understandings of notions and the homogenisation of people and categories.⁴ This allows for the same policies to be described by some as bellicose and divisive, by others as (re-)unifying, without assessing what effect they had, if any, in different regions and parts of society.⁵ The fact that early sources and a wider array of evidence make it possible to downplay Messianic or eschatological ideas and the relevance of ecclesiastic networks and decision-making in politics and diplomacy, does not imply that these views did not gain a foothold in some regions or parts of society. Rather, the growing relevance and authority of the works which present these views in the course of the next few centuries can only be explained by aggregating the three perspectives, as done in this chapter.

3 On the ongoing relevance of the art of *Quellenforschung* and the historiography of events see F. Montinaro, Heraclius, Solid and Liquid, *Plekos* 25 (2023), 473–477, 476, and on the need to search for the active players in the world of Late Antiquity rather than just focus on political, legal and religious entities in physical seclusion from society, see L. Blanke/J. Cromwell, The Monastic Economies in Late Antique Egypt and Palestine: Past, Present, and Future, in: eadem (eds), *Monastic Economies in Late Antique Egypt and Palestine*, Cambridge 2023, 1–38, 4.

4 See M. Horster, Geschichte und Geschichten im Alltag, in: A. Kolb (ed.), *Literacy in Ancient Everyday Life*, Berlin/Boston 2018, 363–86 and J. Marincola, Source-Citations in the Classical Historians, in: J. Verheyden et al. (eds), *On Using Sources in Graeco-Roman, Jewish and Early Christian Literature* (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 327), Leuven 2022, 3–25, 22–24.

5 Contrasting views about the relevance of different works for the reconstruction of imperial policies allows for eirenic descriptions of Heraclius’ religious policy in N. Viermann, *Herakleios, der schwitzende Kaiser. Die oströmische Monarchie in der ausgehenden Spätantike* (Millennium Studien 89), Berlin 2021, 283–300 (especially at 288–9), as well as an analysis of the motivating potential of bellicose discourses in J. Howard-Johnston, *The Last Great War of Antiquity*, Oxford/New York 2021, 244–245.

Undating the sources

The excerpt from Theophanes' *Chronicle*⁶ quoted above can also be found in an earlier homily on the 'Creation of man in the image of God', ascribed to Anastasius of Sinai (*Sermo III*, 1, 84–92).⁷ The editors and a majority of scholars accept this attribution, not least in view of the *scholia* added to this and the other two *sermone de constitutionem hominiis* which connect them and establish links to the exegesis of Genesis 3 in the *Hexaemeron*, another work often transmitted under Anastasius' name.⁸ The texts of the homilies and the *scholia* point to a late seventh-century revision. It is claimed that late in life Anastasius was preparing a theologically coherent *corpus* of select works in enough genres to suggest an author accomplished in all oral and written media fitting for a wise and educated monk and bishop. It is necessary to distinguish this redactor Anastasius from the authorial *persona* 'Anastasius' which emanates from a wide array of biographical *nugae* found in those works and others also ascribed to him, such as the *Questions and answers* and *Narrationes*, or stemming from their reception. Much has been written about a third Anastasius, the historical individual whose life is likely to have borne some resemblance to the biographical discourses about the authorial-*persona* Anastasius. However, any claim about him is hypothetical, especially those derived from texts which were edited often, changing

⁶ See now J.W. Torgerson, *The Chronographia of George the Synkellos and Theophanes: The Ends of Time in Ninth-Century Constantinople* (Brill's Series on the Early Middle Ages 28), Leiden/Boston 2022, 208–211, as well as A. Kompa, 'In search of Syncellus' and Theophanes' own words: the authorship of the *Chronographia* revisited, in: M. Jankowiak/F. Montinaro (eds), *Studies in Theophanes* (Travaux et mémoires 19), Paris 2015, 73–92 and B. Neil, 'Theophanes Confessor on the Arab conquest: the Latin version by Anastasius Bibliothecarius', in: Jankowiak/Montinaro, *Studies* (as this footnote), Paris 2015, 149–158.

⁷ Ed. K.-H. Uthemann, *Anastasii Sinaitae Sermones duo in constitutionem hominis secundum imaginem Dei* (Corpus Christianorum. Series graeca 12), Turnhout 1985, 59–60.

⁸ On *Περὶ τῆς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου κατασκευῆς, λόγος γ'* (*Tractatus III sive Opusculum adversus Monotheletas qui communiter dicitur Homilia tertia de creatione hominis*) see R.G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as others saw it: a survey and evaluation of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian writings on early Islam* (Studies in late antiquity and early Islam 13), Princeton, N.J. 1997, 102, and K.-H. Uthemann, *Anastasios Sinaites. Byzantinisches Christentum in den ersten Jahrzehnten unter arabischer Herrschaft* (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 125), Berlin/Boston 2015, 24 (date), 736–765 (*scholia*) and 778. The arguments about the *scholia* are reconsidered by D. Zaganas, 'The Authenticity of Anastasius Sinaita's *Hexaemeron* (CPG 7770)', *Revue des études byzantines* 73 (2015), 189–201, 195–196. Further on the *sermone*s, see idem, 'Encore sur l'authenticité de l'Hexaéméron d'Anastase le Sinaïte', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 110:3 (2017), 755–78, 768–772. Scholarship on attribution and dating of the works and the *scholia* are reconsidered by idem, *L'Hexaemeron d'Anastase le Sinaïte: Son authenticité, ses sources et son exégèse allégorisante* (Vigiliae Christianae Supplements 172), Leiden 2021, 14–52, 68–75 especially at 33–38 and 72.

considerably the organisation and content, not least the remarks about the seventh century.⁹

The digression about the history of the Roman Empire and the Monothelete controversy at the beginning of *Sermo III* is likely to be the work of the late seventh-century redactor Anastasius. It is a biographically-contained historiography fitting for the homiletic genre and other text-based oratory, such as epistolography. A similar excursus is found in Maximus the Confessor's letters (discussed below). In few sentences, the prelude summarises the century, providing an extremely partisan account of Maximus' and Martin of Rome's fate in a classicising historiographic context of epic cataclysmic dimensions.¹⁰ In it, the Arab expansion occupies the place of the nemesis whose successes can either be signs of the intrinsic problems of the rule, or its consequences. A partisan and unrealistic characterisation of the main characters is embedded in an increasingly accepted background narrative about an invasion in which the aggressor is cast as the seventh-century version of an ongoing problem in the region, under which the population had often suffered and which had occasionally been successful enough to be a matter of concern for the imperial administration.¹¹ The reli-

⁹ See C. Kuehn, Anastasius of Sinai: Biblical Scholar, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 103:1 (2010), 55–85, 54–56. See also C.A. Kuehn/J.D. Baggarly/J.A. Munitiz (ed.), *Anastasios of Sinai. Hexaemeron* (Orientalia Christiana analecta 278), Roma 2007, XIII–XXV, J.A. Munitiz, *Anastasios of Sinai. Questions and answers* (Corpus Christianorum in translation 7), Turnhout 2011, 109–11 and on his narrative *persona* see J. Haldon, The Works of Anastasius of Sinai. A Key Source for the History of Seventh-Century East Mediterranean Society and Belief, in: A. Cameron/L.I. Conrad (eds), *The Byzantine and early Islamic Near East. Papers of the First Workshop on Late Antiquity and Early Islam. Vol.1, Problems in the literary source material* (Studies in late antiquity and early Islam 1), Princeton, N.J. 1992, 107–147 and A. Binggeli, *Anastase le Sinaïte. Récits sur le Sinaï et Récits utiles à l'âme. Édition, traduction, commentaire*. Ph.D. thesis, Université Paris IV/Sorbonne, Paris 2001, 330–362.

¹⁰ Maximus and Martin, alongside Sophronius of Jerusalem are the main protagonists of an ecclesiological revisionism and doctrinal dissent which rose in opposition to the imperial doctrinal decrees on one activity (monoenergetic/miaenergetic) and one will (monothelete) in Christ which were issued under Heraclius. His active doctrinal policy differed much from the hands-off ecclesiastical policy during the reigns of Justin II, Tiberius, Maurice and Phocas, and was marked by a series of synods, trials and condemnations. It remains one of the least understood moments of the development of the balance between ecclesiastic, ascetic and imperial power, in spite of a number of ground-breaking studies, such as C. Lange, *Mia energeia. Untersuchungen zur Einigungspolitik des Kaisers Heraclius und des Patriarchen Sergius von Constantinopel* (Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 66), Tübingen 2012, P. Booth, *Crisis of empire. Doctrine and dissent at the end of late antiquity* (Transformation of the classical heritage 52), Berkeley 2014 and H. Ohme, *Kirche in der Krise: Zum Streit um die Christologie im 7. Jahrhundert* (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 146), Berlin/Boston 2022. These religious networks involved also Merovingian Gaul and Visigothic Spain, and the predominance of hagiographies and ecclesiastic texts, including epistolographic corpora give the impression that they were decisive in diplomatic relations with Byzantium, as discussed by S. Esders, Chindasvinth, the 'Gothic disease', and the Monothelite crisis, *Millennium* 16:1 (2019), 175–212, 190–192.

¹¹ See J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, Arab Tribesmen and Desert Frontiers in Late Antiquity, *Journal of Late Antiquity* 8:1 (2015), 62–96, P. Wood, Al-Hira and its histories, *The Journal of the American Oriental Soci-*

ability of the description of the extent of the destruction is a matter of much scholarly debate.

The redactor Anastasius was a follower of Sophronius, John Moschus and especially of Maximus the Confessor. Their works project authorial *personae* of wise educated and travelled religious men from culturally diverse backgrounds. Biographical features come up in passages which gain further meaning from the qualities associated with the authorial *personae*, which bear only partial resemblance to the individuals and their journeys.¹² Anastasius' works present a similar literary *persona*, in which mobility is a biographical *topos* rather than veridical information.¹³

Another classicising feature of the texts is the Roman imperial contextualisation of Christianity. However, for the redactor and his audience the decades described by Anastasius were marked by only local and some, hardly acknowledged, foreign legislation, administration and taxation being in force. The scenes cast this situation as suboptimal, pointing to the gap left by the central Roman administration especially in litigation and religious conflict. In Anastasius, Palestine life seems to have continued as it used to under Roman rule, and it does not seem like a 'conquered' territory, such as Alsace after 1871 or Crimea after 2014. The picture of dislocation or captivity alluded to in some passages of the pseudo-Anastasiana is imprecise and generic, fitting for other conflagrations. The Arabs are thus cast as just one more challenge of this kind. All the while the works take the durability of Roman institutions for granted, suggesting the immutability of the historiographical representations they advance. For example, Q65 posits that 'if the race of the Saracens were to depart from us today, at once, tomorrow the Green and Blue factions would rise up once more and begin

ety 136:4 (2016), 785–799, F. Millar, Christian Monasticism in Roman Arabia at the Birth of Mahomet, *Semitica et Classica* 2 (2009), 97–115, R. Hoyland, Late Roman Provincia Arabia, Monophysite Monks and Arab Tribes: Problem of Centre and Periphery, *Semitica et Classica* 2 (2009), 117–139, G. Fisher, A New Perspective on Rome's Desert Frontier, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 336 (2004), 49–60 and P. Mayerson, Saracens and Romans: Micro-Macro Relationships, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 274 (1989), 71–79.

12 See K.-H. Uthemann, Anastasios Sinaïtes, in: C.G. Conticello (ed.), *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition. Tome I/1 (VI^e–VII^e s.)* (Corpus Christianorum Claves Subsidia), Turnhout 2015, 517–772, 524–529 and Zaganas, *L'Hexaemeron* (as footnote 8), 72.

13 The skills to deploy and develop literary personae can be better seen in collective efforts which resulted, for example, in Maximus' works, and the wide range of media stemming from the circle of Severan bishops, on which see P. Booth, A circle of Egyptian bishops at the end of Roman rule (c. 600). Texts and Contexts, *Le Muséon* 131 (2018), 21–72, 69. On the editors and pseudepigraphers of Maximus' corpus, see B. Roosen, *Maximi Confessoris Vitae et Passiones Graecae*. The Development of a Hagio-graphic Dossier, *Byzantion* 80 (2010), 408–460, H. Ohme, Maximos Homologes († 662): Martyrium, Märtyrerbewusstsein, „Martyriumssucht“, *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 20:2 (2016), 306–346 and B. Markesinis, La date de la composition du *Corpus* de S. Maxime le Confesseur. Nouvelles données, in: B. Roosen/P. Van Deun (eds), *The Literary Legacy of Byzantium: Editions, Translations, and Studies in Honour of Joseph A. Munitiz SJ* (Byzantioc, Studies in Byzantine History and Civilization 15), Turnhout 2019, 255–287.

killing one another, and the Eastern administrative area, Arabia, Palestine and many other countries'.¹⁴

The Roman Empire alluded to in these texts is at odds with a reality in which the imperial administration holds the 'Greek monks' spread through North Africa, Egypt and the Near East and the followers of Maximus, such as both Anastasii (redactor and literary *persona*), responsible and accountable for the loss of Roman control over much of that territory.¹⁵ Supporting would-be usurpers as once Phocas, Heraclius and Gregory had been, they were said to have impaired the networks of information and, when problems escalated, undermined military cooperation.¹⁶ This and the consequences, such as the amount of destruction and disruption, are downplayed in the biographies of emblematic figures, from Anastasius the Persian to Martin of Rome, and even more in the synodical, dialogical, epistolographic and judicial documentation which Maximus' followers were writing and compiling.¹⁷ A case in point is Ma-

¹⁴ Translated in Munitiz, *Anastasios of Sinai* (as footnote 9), 178 and discussed in Y. Papadogiannakis, Christian Identity in Seventh-Century Byzantium: The Case of Anastasios of Sinai, in: J. Kreiner/H. Reimnitz (eds), *Motions of Late Antiquity*, Turnhout 2016, 249–267, 254–255.

¹⁵ The schism between the sees of Rome and Constantinople in the 670's is reflected in the accounts of the siege of Constantinople, even if by then would-be usurpers such as Mezezius were not supported by Adeodatus of Rome. See M. Jankowiak, The First Arab Siege of Constantinople, in: C. Zuckerman (ed.), *Constructing the seventh century* (Travaux et mémoires 17), Paris 2013, 237–320, 283–284, 309–312.

¹⁶ A reconstruction of the historiography suggested by the imperial policy towards Maximus and his followers can be found in Booth, *Crisis of empire* (as footnote 10), 301–328, W.E. Kaegi, Egypt on the eve of the Muslim conquest, in: C.F. Petry (ed.), *Islamic Egypt, 640–1517* (The Cambridge History of Egypt 1), Cambridge 1998, 34–61, 60–61 and J.L. Van Dieten, Geschichte der Patriarchen von Sergios I. bis Johannes VI. (610–715), in: J.L. van Dieten/C. Mango/P. Wirth (eds), *Geschichte der griechischen Patriarchen von Konstantinopel* (Enzyklopädie der Byzantinistik 24), Amsterdam 1972. See J.P. Conant, *Staying Roman. Conquest and Identity in Africa and the Mediterranean, 439–700*, Cambridge 2012, 365–368. On Maximus' works which can be linked to his passage through Carthage, see M. Jankowiak/P. Booth, A New Date-List of the Works of Maximus the Confessor, in: B. Neil/P. Allen (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor*, Oxford 2015, 19–83, 44–50, P. Booth, Maximus the Confessor, in: A. Kaldellis/N. Siniosoglu (eds), *The Cambridge intellectual history of Byzantium*, Cambridge 2017, 414–430, 419–426, P. Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor. Jesus Christ and the transfiguration of the world* (Christian theology in context), Oxford 2016, 40–63.

¹⁷ See B. Neil, Narrating the Trials and Death in Exile of Pope Martin I and Maximus the Confessor, in: J. Burke (ed.), *Byzantine narrative. Papers in honour of Roger Scott* (Byzantina Australiensia 16), Melbourne/Virginia, Queensland 2006, 71–83, 76–80, Roosen, *Maximi Confessoris* (as footnote 13), Ohme, *Maximos Homologetes* (as footnote 13) and L.J. Salés, The Other *Life* of Maximus the Confessor: A Reevaluation of the Syriac and Greek Lives and the Case for his Alexandrian Origin, *Journal of Late Antiquity* 13:2 (2020), 407–439, on the literary and fictional character of the works which portray Maximus' actions, such as the proceedings of the debate with Pyrrhus, Lateran Synod and trial in Constantinople, and the Lives being likely a well crafted piece of literature. On the theological superiority of this representation of the *persona*, see H. Ohme, *Oikonomia* im monenergetisch-monothetischen Streit, *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 12:2 (2008), 308–343, 339–341. A case in point is the *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, (CPG 7698), a text which has gained some prominence in the late-antique literary studies

ximus' *Epistula* 8.¹⁸ While 'wolves of Arabia' was in the tradition of literature about Palestinian monasticism an allegory for non-Christian Arabs associated with the destruction caused by incursions of the nomads, Maximus, at the time of the first Muslim advances, subsumes the seriousness of this threat into a complex spiritualising exegesis about the incarnation and the removal of moral faults in particular.¹⁹ Very little literary evidence is available to reconstruct the ritual, liturgical and theological landscape of North African Christian hegemony, which was concentrated in urban areas near the coast. Latin had remained the main written language under the Vandals. This did not change when ruled from Constantinople, but characteristics of the

and analyses of urban context of religious agency, such as A. Cameron, *Flights of Fancy: Some Imaginary Debates in Late Antiquity*, in: G. Dunn/W. Mayer (eds), *Christians Shaping Identity from the Roman Empire to Byzantium. Studies Inspired by Pauline Allen* (Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae* 132), Leiden 2015, 385–406, 390–391. According to the most recent analyses, it is likely to have been redacted somewhere, possibly in Italy, ahead of the Council of 680–681, by an author very familiar with the theology and biography associated with Maximus and furthermore revised by another redactor, likewise partial to Maximus, but more familiar with papal editorial techniques of the late seventh-century than Maximus ever was in the middle of the century. See R.W. Strickler, *A Dispute in Dispute: Revisiting the Disputatio cum Pyrrho* Attributed to Maximus the Confessor (CPG 7698), *Sacris Erudiri* 56 (2017), 243–272, 269–271. See also B. Markesinis, *Erreurs récurrentes et certitudes concernant la dernière décennie de la vie de S. Maxime le Confesseur*, *Byzantion* 88 (2016), 329–344. On the literarily more active followers of Maximus and the organisation of their networks see J.C. Larchet, *Le martyr, l'exil et la mort de saint Maxime le Confesseur et de ses deux disciples, Anastase le Moine et Anastase l'Apocrisiaire. Quelques précisions en rapport avec des découvertes archéologiques récentes*, *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 108:1 (2013), 65–97, 92–95 and H. Ohme, *Der lange Widerstand gegen eine offizielle Heiligenverehrung des Maximus Homologetes († 662) im byzantinischen Reich*, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 109:1 (2016), 109–150, 113–122.

18 See R.W. Strickler, *The "Wolves of Arabia": A reconsideration of Maximus the Confessor's epistula 8*, *Byzantion* 86 (2016), 419–439, 426–432, 438 with reference to the scriptural echoes and the exegesis the relevant passages had had.

19 Carthage and other areas of North Africa had been exposed to Berber skirmishes for decades, and, in the local landscape, changing patterns of tensions are hardly notable. See Y. Modéran, *Les Maures et l'Afrique romaine (IV^e–VII^e siècle)* (Bibliothèque des écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome 314), Rome 2003, 784–785; 798–799 and on raids by Muslim Arab soldiers, C. Fenwick, *Conquest to Conversion: The Archaeology of Religious Transformation in Early Medieval North Africa*, *Journal of Islamic Archaeology* 9:2 (2023), 199–225, 211. On place-based identity, see J. Martínez Jiménez/C. Tejerizo-García, *Assessing place-based identities in the early Middle Ages: a proposal for post-Roman Iberia*, *Early Medieval Europe* 31:1 (2023), 23–50, here 23–24. Unsurprisingly, no Anastasius Sinaite flourished in North Africa in the second half of the seventh century, cf. W.E. Kaegi, *Seventh-century Identities: the Case of North Africa*, in: W. Pohl/C. Gantner/R. Payne (eds), *Visions of community in the post-Roman world. The West, Byzantium and the Islamic world, 300–1100*, Farnham 2012, 167. See also C. Fenwick, *Early medieval urbanism in Ifriqiya and the emergence of the Islamic city*, in: S. Panzram/L. Callegarin (eds), *Entre civitas y madina. El mundo de las ciudades en la Península Ibérica y en el norte de África (siglos iv–ix)* (Collection de la Casa de Velázquez 167), Madrid 2018, 203–220 and, on rural sites, V. Michel, *Le monde rural et la christianisation en Cyrénaïque: éléments de réflexion*, in: F. Baratte/V. Brouquier-Reddé/E. Rocca (eds) *Du culte aux sanctuaires: L'architecture religieuse dans l'Afrique romaine et byzantine* (Orient & Méditerranée 25), Paris 2018, 301–336.

discourses imposed by the Eastern imperial Church spread and rituals changed, not least because renovations carried out under imperial auspices after the defeat of the Vandals modified the configuration of sacred and urban space.²⁰ To some extent, the late sixth and seventh-century Greek diaspora of monks and religious people displaced by political, military and religious factors especially from Palestine interacted with the population, sometimes peacefully, sometimes forcefully, especially in its proselytising efforts, attested in the attempts to convert Jews or to attract followers to monastic houses.²¹ This interaction was not substantial and the discourses of the Greek diaspora show hardly any signs of it. For example, Maximus' works do not refer to Augustine's theology or church politics any more than an author who remained in the East. These religious Eastern migrants are archaeologically invisible and did not affect the balance of Greek and Latin epigraphy.²² The departure of most of them does not seem to have left a gap in liturgical or pastoral care.

²⁰ See A.H. Merrills/R. Miles, *The vandals* (The peoples of Europe), Chichester, U.K./Malden, MA 2010, 255, L. Dossey, Exegesis and dissent in Byzantine North Africa, in: S.T. Stevens/J.P. Conant (eds), *North Africa under Byzantium and Early Islam* (Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine symposia and colloquia), Washington, D.C. 2016, 251–267, R. Miles, Rebuilding Christian Carthage after the Byzantine Conquest, in: R. Bockmann/A. Leone/P. von Rummel (eds), *Africa – Ifriqiya. Continuity and change in North Africa from the Byzantine to the early Islamic Age. Papers of a conference held in Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano – Terme di Diocleziano, 28 February – 2 March 2013* (Palilia 34), Wiesbaden 2019, 57–76 and Fenwick, Conquest (as footnote 19), 202. See also D. Quast, Creating Memory in Vandal Period Africa, *Acta Archaeologica Carpathica* 55 (2020), 215–234.

²¹ On forceful conversions and persecutions under Heraclius, see S. Esders, Herakleios, Dagobert und die «beschnittenen Völker». Die Umwälzungen des Mittelmeerraums im 7. Jahrhundert in der fränkischen Chronik des sog. Fredegar, in: A. Goltz/H. Leppin/H. Schlange-Schöningen (eds), *Jenseits der Grenzen. Studien zur spätantiken und frühmittelalterlichen Geschichtsschreibung* (Millennium-Studien 25), Berlin/New York 2009, 239–311, S. Esders, The Prophesied Rule of a 'Circumcised People': A Traveling Tradition from the Seventh-Century Mediterranean, in: Y. Hen/T.F.X. Noble (eds), *Barbarians and Jews: Jews and Judaism in the Early Medieval West* (Diaspora 4), Turnhout 2018, 119–154, R.W. Strickler, Monsters Dressed in Purple: Imperial Critique in Early Seventh-Century Byzantine Literature, in: D. Džino/R. W. Strickler (eds), *Dissidence and persecution in Byzantium: from Constantine to Michael Psellos* (Byzantina Australiensia 26), Leiden/Boston 2021, 52–69, 60–62 and N. Hächler, Anordnungen zu jüdischen Zwangstauften unter Kaiser Herakleios (610–641) als Folgen staatlicher Resilienzstrategien, *Byzantion* 91 (2021), 155–195. On the influence of Greek and of Eastern trends in North African Christianity, see J.P. Conant, Latinity in Early Islamic North Africa, *Eranos. Acta philologica Suecana* 112 (2021), 27–50, 30–34, Booth, *Crisis of empire* (as footnote 10), 199–201, and L.M. Frenkel, Anastasius of Sinai's reaction to the Islamic expansion, *Cadernos Patristicos* 12:24 (2019), 145–192.

²² See Dossey, Exegesis (as footnote 20), 263–266, G. Hays, Sounds from a silent land. The Latin poetry of Byzantine North Africa, in: Stevens/Conant, *North Africa* (as footnote 20), 269–293, and on the survival rate of inscriptions, P. Heřmánková/V. Kaše/A. Sobotkova, Inscriptions as data: digital epigraphy in macro-historical perspective, *Journal of Digital History* 1:1 (2021), 13. See also P. Winterhager, Rome in the Seventh-Century Byzantine empire. A Migrant's Perspective from the Circle of Maximos the Confessor, in: N.S.M. Matheou/T. Kampianaki/L.M. Bondioli (eds), *From Constantinople to the frontier. The city and the cities* (The medieval Mediterranean), Leiden/Boston 2016, 191–206, and C.O. Tommasi Moreschini, L'ultima età romana dell'Africa: tra fedeltà politica e dissensi dottrinali, in: C. Alzati/L.

A number of the historiographical accounts which mention or suggest Arab rule are enlivened by a rather idyllic scenario of tales of cooperation and strategies to cope with a non-Christian foreign rule in the region. For readers in the Roman Empire such as Maximus' followers, who were exposed to sanctions and punishments, this would have been further criticism of the impiety of the emperors who had antagonised their spiritual authorities and were against their followers.²³ It was pleasing and plausible to them to see their saints' political and social successes under Arab rule. This reading has been applied to Theophanes' account of Sophronius' handling of conflicts under Arab occupation.²⁴ The redactor Anastasius leaves the historian to read between the lines that his character 'Anastasius' could only flourish openly in his pastoral and theological undertakings during the second half of the seventh century because he was beyond the reach of imperial policy that would have none of the cult of Martin and Maximus, whatever merits their theological and ecclesiastic ideas had.²⁵

The ecumenical orthodoxy of this theology was being consolidated by the transmission of a synodical documentation with the redaction of which Maximus had been

Vaccaro (eds), *Africa/Ifriqiya. Il Maghreb nella storia religiosa di Christianesimo e Islam* (Storia Religiosa Euro-Mediterranea 5) Vatican, 2016, 179–201. On the continuity of the cult of its saints in North Africa, see J.P. Conant, *Anxieties of Violence: Christians and Muslims in Conflict in Aghlabid North Africa and the Central Mediterranean*, *Al-Masaq* 27:1 (2015), 7–23, idem, *Latinity* (as preceding footnote), 43–44, Fenwick, *Conquest* (as footnote 19), 211–218.

23 Ohme, *Der Lange Widerstand* (as footnote 17), 149–150. On compassion and community as the culmination of a virtuous ascetic path according to Maximus and its influence on later literature, see D. Costache, *Living above Gender: Insights from Saint Maximus the Confessor*, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 21:2 (2013), 261–290, 262, 280.

24 See Neil, Theophanes (as in footnote 3) and W. Mayer/B. Neil, *The Earliest Greek Understandings of Islam. John of Damascus and Theophanes the Confessor*, in: W. Mayer/B. Neil (eds), *Religious conflict from early Christianity to the rise of Islam* (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 121), Berlin 2013, 215–228, 226–228. See Y. Stoyanov, *Defenders and Enemies of the True Cross: The Sasanian Conquest of Jerusalem in 614 and Byzantine Ideology of Anti-Persian Warfare* (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-Historische Klasse. Sitzungsberichte 819) Wien 2011, 16–23, J. Magness, *Archaeological Evidence for the Sasanian Persian Invasion of Jerusalem*, in: K.G. Holum/H. Lapin (eds), *Shaping the Middle East. Jews, Christians, and Muslims in an age of transition 400–800 C.E.* (Studies and texts in Jewish history and culture 20), Bethesda, MD, 2011, 85–98, G. Avni, *The Byzantine-Islamic transition in Palestine. An archaeological approach* (Oxford studies in Byzantium), Oxford 2014, 304–305, idem, *The Persian Conquest of Jerusalem (614 c.e.) – An Archaeological Assessment*, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 357 (2010), 35–48 and A. Walmsley, *Early Islamic Syria. An archaeological assessment* (Duckworth debates in archaeology), London 2007, 45–47 for an archaeological assessment of Persian destruction of Jerusalem and Palestine that does not allow to assign much if at all damage to the advancing forces, but rather to internal strife and periods of weak rule. On later literary accounts, see Hächler, *Anordnungen* (as footnote 21), 163–175.

25 See B. Hansen, *Making Christians in the Umayyad Levant: Anastasius of Sinai and Christian Rites of Maintenance*, *Studies in Church History* 59 (2023), 98–118, 100–102 and M. Kulhánková, *Zwischen Wüste und Welt: die Konstruktion des Raumes in den byzantinischen erbaulichen Erzählungen*, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 108:2 (2015), 715–734, 724–726.

involved early on. The Arab invasion is mentioned in the closing prayer of the third session of the Lateran Synod of 649 – ACO ser. sec. I, 172 l. 31 (173 l. 29) – and in Stephen of Jerusalem's letter reporting on Sophronius, one of the supporting documents read into the acts of the second session – ACO ser. sec. I, 40 l. 32 (41 l. 30). In a letter which Martin and the synod allegedly sent to the emperor, the concluding plea cum promise refers to barbarians.²⁶ Furthermore, the *acta* of the Third Council of Constantinople (680–81) contain a version of the synodical letter which Sophronius sent to Sergius of Constantinople in which the Saracen attacks are described. Allegedly it was read out in its entirety during the eleventh session (ACO ser. sec. II/1, 410–94), before being declared orthodox (ACO ser. sec. II/2 580 l. 10–11). The narrative is also in the different versions of the letter circulated in Greek and in translations, which reflects the considerably different versions Sophronius sent to other sees.²⁷ In the case of the 692 Quinisext Council, Canon 39 no doubts alludes to the Arab conquest of Cyprus but the redactors clearly chose the generalising note found also in Martin's synodical letter whereby explicit acknowledgement and incrimination of the new rulers are avoided, and it is a precedent applicable to similar scenarios in which a bishop and his closest followers transplant a see.²⁸

The references to the incursions carry with them an implicit blame and accusation that the imperial apostasy had exposed the people to defeat. From the eighth century on, readers would increasingly identify them with the conquest, but the texts do not show that the Arab invasion was a 'Conquest' for seventh-century followers of Maximus and other dyotheletists redactors. Threats to the integrity of the realm were staple arguments used by councils seeking imperial recognition and enforcement of

²⁶ See R. Price/P. Booth/C. Cubitt (eds), *The acts of the Lateran Synod of 649* (Translated texts for historians 61), Liverpool 2014, 416 and 393–394 on the authenticity.

²⁷ See P. Allen, *Sophronius of Jerusalem and seventh-century heresy. The synodical letter and other documents – introduction, texts, translations, and commentary* (Oxford early Christian texts), Oxford 2009, 63–64, R. Riedinger, Die Nachkommen der *Epistula synodica* des Sophronios von Jerusalem (a. 634; CPG 7635), *Römische Historische Mitteilungen* 26 (1984), 91–106, and H. Ohme, Rom, der *Tomus Leonis* und das 6. Ökumenische Konzil (680/681), *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 24:2 (2020), 289–354, 330–331.

²⁸ Transl. R. Price, *The Canons of the Quinisext Council (691/2)* (Translated Texts for Historians 74), Liverpool 2020, 119–120. See W. Brandes, Orthodoxy and heresy in the seventh century: prosopographical observations on monotheletism, in: A. Cameron (ed.), *Fifty years of prosopography. The later Roman Empire, Byzantium and beyond* (Proceedings of the British Academy 118), New York, NY 2003, 103–118 and M.T.G. Humphreys, *Law, power, and imperial ideology in the iconoclast era, c.680–850* (Oxford studies in Byzantium), Oxford 2015, 37–38. Neither substantial deportation or migration are corroborated archaeologically, but the reception of Canon 39 in the Byzantine tradition took it for granted that John of Cyprus had left the island with much of his flock after the destruction of his city and transferred his see to the eparchy of Hellespont, 'disastrously' according to V. Peri, *Le chiese nell'Impero e le chiese "tra i Barbari"*, in: G. Nedungatt/M. Featherstone (eds), *The Council in Trullo revisited* (Kanonika 6), Roma 1995, 199–213, 204.

their decision.²⁹ Thus, barbarian attacks are mentioned in the conciliar documentation of the First Council of Ephesus (431), for example in the first petition of the Eastern delegates:

For nothing, O emperor, would be more imperial than the cause on behalf of which you have already hastened to start wars against the Persians and other barbarians, while Christ rewards you for your zeal on his behalf with effortless victories.³⁰

... the radiance of the orthodox religion that shone forth at long last under Constantine of holy memory and was then confirmed by your thrice-blessed grandfather and father and your piety, and has been strengthened by your power in relation to both other barbarian nations and the land of Persia, should not suffer within the imperial palace itself or be obscured in the presence of your serenity.³¹

Further details are given in the Coptic acts, locating the wars in Africa.³²

The seventh-century references to contemporary or recent events were echoing the fourth- and fifth-century precedents of linking a short term territorial loss (ended with the 'reconquest' of Africa) to a schism (partially overcome by the Formula of Reunion and 'definitively' by Chalcedon). The fragility of the Roman political power to Arabs and their allies (people who from the vantage point of the capitals had been seen as rather negligible outsiders in comparison to Sasanian Iran and its Persianism) was associated with that (ongoing) schism and with the fragmentation of Chalcedonianism by the imperial administration and Christian leaders alike in their use of a

²⁹ See B. Roosen, A Dyothelite Florilegium in the Run-up to the Lateran Council (a.649). Maximus the Confessor's *Tomos* to Stephen of Dor Against the *Ekthesis* [CPG 7697.15], in: Roosen/Van Deun, *Literary Legacy* (as footnote 13), 415–534, C. Cubitt, The Lateran Council of 649 as an Ecumenical Council, in: R.M. Price/M. Whitby (eds), *Chalcedon in context: church councils 400–700* (Translated texts for historians. Contexts 1), Liverpool 2009, 133–147 and J. Tannous, In Search of Monotheletism, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 68 (2014), 29–67, 36, 44.

³⁰ Transl. R. Price/ed. T. Graumann, *The Council of Ephesus of 431: Documents and Proceedings*, Liverpool 2020, 580. οὐδὲν γὰρ ἂν εἴη σοί, βασιλεῦ, τοῦδε βασιλικώτερον, ὑπὲρ οὗ καὶ πρὸς Πέρσας ἤδη καὶ πρὸς ἑτέρους βαρβάρους ἔσπευσας ἐπανελέσθαι πολέμους, ἀντιδιδόντος σοι τοῦ Χριστοῦ τὰς ἀκμητὶ νίκας τῆς ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ προθυμίας. ACO I 1/7, 73 l. 3–5.

³¹ Transl. Price/Graumann, *Council* (as preceding footnote), 581. . . . καὶ μὴ τὴν ἐπὶ τοῦ τῆς ἁγίας λήξεως Κωνσταντίνου μόλις ποτὲ τῆς ὀρθοδόξου θρησκείας γεγонуῖαν ἐκλαμψιν καὶ διὰ τῶν τρισμακαρίων πάππου τε καὶ πατρὸς τῆς σῆς εὐσεβείας βεβαιωθείσαν, παρὰ δὲ τοῦ σοῦ κράτους εἰς τε ἕτερα ἔθνη βαρβαρικά καὶ εἰς τὴν Περσῶν χώραν κρατυνθεῖσαν ἐν αὐτοῖς κάμνουν τοῖς βασιλείοις καὶ παρὰ τῇ ὑμετέρῃ θολοῦσθαι γαληνότητι. ACO I 1/7, 73 l. 24–28.

³² See R.M. Price, Fact and Fiction, Emperor and Council, in the Coptic Acts of Ephesus, *Annuaire Historiae Conciliorum* 46:1–2 (2014), 9–26, 16 and L.M. Frenkel, 'Dear prefect, Stop the ill rumour!' – John of Antioch's tactics to counter Cyrillian propaganda after the Council of Ephesus I, in: A.Brent/M. Vincent (eds), *Studia patristica. Vol. LXXIV, Including papers presented at the Fifth British Patristics Conference, London, 3–5 September 2014* (Studia Patristica 74), Leuven 2016, 303–16, 313–314.

rhetoric of Empire cum Church, in which the former would safeguard orthodoxy, and the latter, give it the unity which neither power nor law could.³³

Overtly classicising works aside, the stereotyped characterisation of violence and destruction during the Arab expansion in seventh-century Greek texts is not surprising or particularly noteworthy when seen from the perspective of Eastern Roman fourth- and fifth-century writings on Christian polemics, especially when the sixth-century repertoire is thoroughly taken into account. Eschatological, judaising and anti-heretical narrative *topoi* were used to denigrate rivals and to come to terms with the complex religious belongings of most of the population. Accusations of paganism and magic often focused on aspects of classical *paideia* used by the more institutionalised religious expressions such as the Roman imperial and Vandal churches, Manichaeism and rabbinic Judaism.³⁴

33 See M. P. Canepa, Rival Images of Iranian Kingship and Persian Identity in Post-Achaemenid Western Asia, in: R. Strootman/M. J. Versluys (eds), *Persianism in Antiquity* (Alte Geschichte), Stuttgart 2017, 201–223, M. Kahlos, Ditches of destruction – Cyril of Alexandria and the rhetoric of public security, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 107:2 (2014), 11–33, and H. Ohme, Die Bedeutung der Geschichtstheologie im monenergetischmonothetischen Streit des 7. Jahrhunderts, *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 112:1 (2015), 27–61, 44–45. On Sophronius' discursive options that provide an alternative to the (Eusebian) connection of church and state, see P. Booth, Sophronius of Jerusalem and the End of Roman History, in: P. Wood (ed.), *History and identity in the late antique Near East, 500–1000* (Oxford studies in late antiquity), Oxford 2013, 1–28.

34 See Y. Kiel, Gnostic and Mithraic Themes in *Sefer Zerubbabel*, in: I. Dorfmann-Lazarev (ed.), *Apocryphal and Esoteric Sources in the Development of Christianity and Judaism: The Eastern Mediterranean, the Near East, and Beyond* (Texts and Studies in Eastern Christianity 21), Leiden 2021, 411–436, 420 and other contributions in the same volume. See also A. Treiger, Palestinian Origenism and the Early History of the Maronites. In Search of the Origins of the Arabic Theology of Aristotle, in: D. Janos (ed.), *Ideas in motion in Baghdad and beyond: philosophical and theological exchanges between Christians and Muslims in the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries* (Islamic History and Civilization 124), Leiden/Boston 2015, 44–80, Hoyland, Late Roman Provincia Arabia (as footnote 11), K.B. Stern, *Inscribing devotion and death. Archaeological evidence for Jewish populations of North Africa* (Religions in the Graeco-Roman world 161), Leiden 2008, 200–202, P. Crone, Jewish Christianity and The Qur'an (Part Two), *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 75:1 (2016), 1–21, 7–8 (especially), P. Crone, Islam, Judeo-Christianity, and Byzantine Iconoclasm, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 2 (1980), 59–97, 87–95 (reprinted in P. Crone (ed.), *From Kavād to al-Ghazālī. Religion, law, and political thought in the Near East, c. 600-c. 1100* (Collected studies 819), Aldershot, UK; Burlington, VT 2005, 59–97, A.Y. Reed, Textuality between Death and Memory: The Prehistory and Formation of the Parabiblical Testament, *Jewish Quarterly Review* 104:3 (2014), 381–412, H. Lundhaug, The Dishna Papers and the Nag Hammadi Codices. The Remains of a Single Monastic Library?, in: H. Lundhaug/L. Jenott (eds), *The Nag Hammadi Codices and late antique Egypt* (Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 110), Tübingen 2018, 329–386, 336–338, B. Hendrickx, Al-Kahina: The Last Ally of the Roman-Byzantines in the Maghreb Against the Muslim Arab Conquest?, *Journal of Early Christian History* 3:2 (2013), 47–61, 53–55, S.N. Lieu, The diffusion, persecution and transformation of Manichaeism in Late Antiquity and pre-modern China, in: A. Papaconstantinou/N. McLynn/D.L. Schwartz (eds), *Conversion in Late Antiquity. Christianity, Islam, and beyond. Papers from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Sawyer Seminar, University of Oxford, 2009–2010*, Farnham 2015, 123–140, C.J. Robin, L'Arabie dans le Coran. Réexamen de

The literary expression of Roman imperial identity stressed the unity of the territory. It related internal uprisings and attacks from outside to weakness and degradation of the *oikoumene* or one of its institutions. Moreover, an ideal authorial persona of an orator or a representative body (such as a synod) would correlate his argument and the betterment of the *res publica*.³⁵ Engaging with this Roman rhetoric of universal consensus, Christian polemics were presented in ecclesiastic historiography and especially in the literature addressed to the court, such as panegyrics, letters and conciliar documentation, as being relevant for imperial identity and politics by relating them to historical events mentioned or described with the vocabulary and imagery proper of Christian discourse.³⁶

Fifth- and early sixth-century Christian authors such as Pseudo-Joshua, Socrates Scholasticus, Philostorgius, and Timothy Aelurus combined the non-Christian thread of 'decay from a better past' biblically derived interpretative structures with which they explained political catastrophes such as the decline of western Roman political power. Late-antique religious explanations of catastrophe largely served as a literary motif for introspective criticism whereby Christian authors could connect the Islamic conquests to neglect of Christian tenets, that is, to the spread of heresies adopted by many, and, as in Jewish literature, this could be expressed with eschatological tropes.³⁷

Prominent in seventh- and eighth-century religious discourses and literature, eschatological themes reflected a shift away from a world model in which rulers' sup-

quelques termes à la lumière des inscriptions préislamiques, in: F. Déroche/C.J. Robin/M. Zink (eds), *Les origines du Coran, le Coran des origines*, Paris 2015, 27–74, and F. Millar, *Religion, language and community in the Roman Near East. Constantine to Muhammad* (Schweich lectures 2010), Oxford 2013.

³⁵ See K.-J. Hölkeskamp, *Libera res publica. Die politische Kultur des antiken Rom – Positionen und Perspektiven* (Alte Geschichte), Stuttgart 2017, 174–175 and C. Moatti, *Res publica. Histoire romaine de la chose publique* (Ouvertures), Paris 2018, 287–292, 331–340.

³⁶ Cf. P. Van Nuffelen, The poetics of Christian history in Late Antiquity, in: M. Vinzent (ed.), *Studia Patristica. Vol. LXXXV – Papers presented at the Seventeenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2015 – Volume 18: Liturgica and Tractatus Symboli; Orientalia; Critica et Philologica; Historica* (Studia Patristica 92), Leuven 2017, 227–246, 240–242, A. Camplani, La percezione della crisi religiosa calcedonese in alcuni testi storici e agiografici prodotti negli ambienti dell'episcopato di Alessandria, *Adamantius* 19 (2013), 240–255, N. Viermann, Merging Supreme Commander and Holy Man. George of Pisidia's Poetic Response to Heraclius' Military Campaigns, *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 70 (2020), 379–402, H. Leppin, George Pisides' *Expediatio Persica* and Discourses on Warfare in Late Antiquity, in: F. Hadjitofti/A. Lefteratou (eds), *The Genres of Late Antique Christian Poetry: Between Modulations and Transpositions* (Trends in Classics Suppl. 86) Berlin/Boston 2020, 293–310, and still J.D.C. Frendo, History and Panegyric in the Age of Heraclius: The Literary Background to the Composition of the 'Histories' of Theophylact Simocatta, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 42 (1988), 143–156, 155–156.

³⁷ See E. Watts, Interpreting Catastrophe: Disasters in the Works of Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite, Socrates Scholasticus, Philostorgius, and Timothy Aelurus, *Journal of Late Antiquity* 2:1 (2009), 79–98, D. Olster, Ideological Transformation and the Evolution of Imperial Presentation in the Wake of Islam's Victory, in: E. Grypeou (ed.), *The encounter of Eastern Christianity with early Islam* (History of

port was a factor in the flourishing of a Christian church.³⁸ Years under foreign control, absent Roman rule, or the rule of emperors who did not uphold a view of orthodoxy, yielded a viable alternative discourse which could be more relevant than the arsenal of (fictional) narratives about the first centuries of Christianity under Roman rule.³⁹ Nevertheless several Greek ecclesiastical sources still expected the Roman empire to end up being as victorious against the Arabs as it had been against Persia as soon as its rulers adopted their orthodoxy and both ecclesiastic and imperial leaders achieved a reunion of all Christians. In these texts, the lapse into heresy was presented not only as a loss for the heretic but also as damaging for the life of all Christians. Few, and mostly marginal, are the voices trying to repeat with the Arabs the *economy* in which a pagan world becomes the Christian city.

However, the theological landscape in the Roman Empire changed in the next centuries and Maximus' followers no longer needed to remain marginal and their literature subversive. Rather, works by and about this flourishing of 'Greek Palestinian monasticism' gradually gained institutional recognition, readers, editors and users in the Byzantine Empire. During reception historical information was often left out or adapted especially once, gradually, the theological content became more relevant

Christian-Muslim relations 5), Leiden/Boston 2006, 45–72, A. Lankina, Leadership for the Christian Empire: Emperors and Bishops in the *Ecclesiastical History* of Philostorgius, *Church History* 87:3 (2018), 684–717, T. Tesei, "The Romans Will Win!" Q 30:2–7 in Light of 7th c. Political Eschatology, *Der Islam* 95:1 (2018), 1–29, V. Déroche, Anti-Jewish polemic and the emergence of Islam, in: A. Cameron/R. Hoyland (eds), *Doctrine and debate in the East Christian world, 300–1500* (The worlds of Eastern Christianity, 300–1500 12), Farnham/Burlington 2011, 85–107, idem, Polémique anti-judaïque et émergence de l'Islam (7^e–8^e siècles), *Revue des études byzantines* 57:1 (1999), 141–161, A.W. Hughes, Messianism and the Shadow of History. Judaism and Islam in a Time of Uncertainty, in: M. Daneshgar/W. Saleh (eds), *Islamic Studies Today. Essays in Honor of Andrew Rippin* (Texts and Studies on the Qur'an 11), Leiden/Boston, 2017, 145–163, and A. Borrut, The Future of the Past: Historical Writing in Early Islamic Syria and Umayyad Memory, in: A. George/A. Marsham (eds), *Power, Patronage, and Memory in Early Islam: Perspectives on Umayyad Elites*, New York 2018, 275–300. See however T. Raum, *Szenen eines Überlebenskampfes. Akteure und Handlungsspielräume im Imperium Romanum 610–630* (Roma Aeterna 9), Stuttgart 2021, 195, 217–221.

38 See the collected studies in H. Amirav/E. Grypeou/G. A. G Stroumsa, *Apocalypticism and Eschatology in Late Antiquity: Encounters in the Abrahamic Religions 6th-8th Centuries* (Late antique history and religion 17), Leuven 2017, S.J. Shoemaker, *The Apocalypse of Empire: Imperial Eschatology in Late Antiquity and Early Islam* (Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion), Philadelphia 2018, R.W. Strickler, Utopias of Deliverance in Seventh-Century Apocalyptic Discourse, in: B. Neil/K. Simic (eds) *Memories of Utopia: The Revision of Histories and Landscapes in Late Antiquity*, Abington (2020), 171–188, and J.C. Reeves, Jewish Apocalyptic Lore in Early Islam, in: J. Ashton (ed.), *Revealed Wisdom* (Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity 88), Leiden 2014, 200–216. Still relevant is the landmark study by G.J. Reinink, *Die Syrische Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius* (Corpus scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 541), Louvain 1993, vii–xxxvi. Necessary caution is discussed by L. I. Lied, Review of "The Destruction of Jerusalem and the Idea of Redemption in the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch", by R. Nir, *Journal of Semitic Studies* 50:2 (2005), 403–405.

39 See Booth, *Crisis of empire* (as footnote 10), 249, 282.

than the documentation of the characters and actions of the historiographic personae.⁴⁰ Thus, the editors of Maximus' letters considered the spiritualising interpretation of the 'wolves of Arabia' still plausible even though a significant event of his biography was his relation with Gregory, who had been killed in battle against the invaders. More to the point are the changes to some passages in the Anastasiana such as Q117(69) of the *Erotapokriseis*, which the author of *Quaestiones ad Antiochum ducem* 44 stripped of its historical content, making the gist of the argument unintelligible.⁴¹ On the other hand, layers of cruelty and wanton violence were added to some stories in (pseudo-)Anastasius' *Narrationes*, a collection of sayings, often transmitted intermingled with John Moschus' *Pratum* or monastic *kephalaia*. No manuscript preserves a set as authored in the seventh century, rather, they are made of three parts: a pre-conquest version, and two which stem from a set allegedly written by the same Anastasius after it. This was split during transmission, with part C keeping or gaining more details about the Arab occupation. A saying describes a group of Christians who, for example, are prevented from going to church for a Marian feast. Where in fifth-

40 See G. Benevich, Maximus the Confessor's polemics against anti-Origenism. *Epistulae* 6 and 7 as a context for the *Ambigua ad Iohannem*, *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 104:1 (2009), 5–15 and Strickler, "Wolves of Arabia" (as footnote 18), 423 on the relation of the theological content of Maximus' letters to other of his works, and on the relevance of Maximus' arguments for engaging with Islamic notions about the God-man relation, see G.I. Benevich, Christological Polemics of Maximus the Confessor and the Emergence of Islam onto the World Stage, *Theological Studies* 72:2 (2011), 335–344, 342–343.

41 See V. Déroche, La polémique anti-judaïque au VI^e et au VII^e siècle: un memento inédit, les *Képhalaia*, in: *Mélanges Cécile Morrisson*. (Travaux et mémoires. Collège de France, Centre de Recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance 11), Paris 1991, 275–311, 283 and idem, Polémique (as footnote 37), 151 – reprinted G. Dagron/V. Déroche, *Juifs et Chrétiens en Orient byzantin* (Bilans de recherche 5), Paris 2010, 473. On the authenticity and the identity of the addressee, see C. Macé, Les *Quaestiones ad Antiochum ducem* d'un Pseudo-Athanase (CPG 2257). Un état de la question, in: M.-P. Bussières (ed.), *La littérature des questions et réponses dans l'Antiquité profane et chrétienne: de l'enseignement à l'exégèse. Actes du séminaire sur le genre des questions et réponses tenu à Ottawa les 27 et 28 septembre 2009* (Instrumenta Patristica et Mediaevalia 64), Turnhout 2013, 121–150. The casting of pastoral counselling in Anastasius' literary activity is usually taken at face value, as in 'the fact remains that he welcomed questions from the puzzled faithful, and he seems to have done his honest best to answer them' in Munitiz, *Anastasios of Sinai* (as footnote 9), 16. However, the analysis of the literary frame has to take into account Anastasius' place in the tradition of Sophronius and especially of Moschus and Maximus the Confessor, which has long been shown to be a literary device. Compare, for example, Uthemann, *Anastasios Sinaites* (as footnote 8), 555 and P. Blowers, *Exegesis and spiritual pedagogy in Maximus the Confessor. An investigation of the Quaestiones ad Thalassium* (Christianity and Judaism in antiquity), Notre Dame, Ind. 1991, 49–52, 69–73 (esp.) as well as Costache, *Living* (as footnote 23), 262, Strickler, *Monsters* (as footnote 21), 64 and Hansen, *Making Christians* (as footnote 25). See moreover A. Papaconstantinou, *Saints and Saracens. On Some Miracle Accounts of the Early Arab Period*, in: D. Sullivan/E.A. Fisher/S. Papaioannou (eds), *Byzantine religious culture. Studies in honor of Alice-Mary Talbot* (The medieval mediterranean 92), Leiden 2012, 323–338, 335, C. Sahner, *Christian Martyrs under Islam. Religious Violence and the Making of the Muslim World*, Princeton, N.J. 2018, 91–92 and Allen, *Sophronius* (as footnote 27), 16–21.

century polemics the culprit could well have been a Nestorian bishop, the intranarrative setting in collection A refers to a Jewish lord, while collection C, describes the Jew as a local administrator imposed by the Arabs.⁴² Thus, the texts again served to be used as proof of what had happened.

This is not significantly different from what Anastasius the redactor had himself done when creating the *Questions and answers* and *Narrationes*. Several of them are based on earlier *Quaestiones* or incorporate passages from Moschus' *Pratum* or works attributed to Sophronius.⁴³ As with the contemporary florilegia, the considerable textual malleability ongoing during the seventh to ninth centuries often affected the historical content. Cameos of daily life appear in Christian literature insofar as they contributed to the persuasiveness of the main argument and correspond largely to the shared view of the intended public. The Arabs are the real-life incident which heightens the urgency of dealing with the heresies for the sake of the unity in faith of the empire, while displaying the competence of personae such as Maximus and Anastasius as monk, bishop, follower, and the coherence of their works as exegetes, orators and preachers, letter writers and publishers, not in phases but all at once every time.

To some extent, this applies also to Theophanes, likewise a champion of Martin's and Maximus' views. Although it is unlikely that he drew the characterisation of the Arabic expansion directly from Anastasius, his source may have pointed out the authorship of the passage.⁴⁴ The historiographic reliability of the persona of the Anastasiana was growing, not least with the accretion of apocrypha to it by which traits and events were added to the biographical narrative that showed his closeness to the events.⁴⁵ Not only was he an eye-witness, but well-travelled, his opinion and recollections were representative of the whole Roman Empire. His accuracy and reliability were guaranteed by his expertise in matters of war and honesty, having the skills of a

⁴² See B. Flusin, *Démons et Sarrasins: L'auteur et le propos des Diègēmata Stèrìktiká d'Anastaste le Sinaïte*, in: *Mélanges* (as preceding footnote), 381–409, 400–403. Some separately transmitted *Narrationes* – edited by A. Binggeli, *Un nouveau témoin des Narrationes d'Anastase le Sinaïte dans les membra disjecta d'un manuscrit sinaïtique (Sinaiticus MF6 + MF21)*, *Revue des études byzantines* 62:1 (2004), 261–268 – also do not mention the Saracens. In common with Anastasius Sinaiticus' *Hodegos*, they name (according to a critical emendation) only Novatian as heresiarch.

⁴³ See D. Krausmüller, 'At the resurrection we will not recognise one another'. Radical devaluation of social relations in the lost model of Anastasius' and Pseudo-Athanasius' *Questions and answers*, *Byzantion* 83 (2013), 201–227, 202, 207 and B.H. Stolte, *The Challenge of Change. Notes on the Legal History of the Reign of Heraclius*, in: G.J. Reinink/B.H. Stolte (eds), *The reign of Heraclius (610–641). Crisis and confrontation* (Groningen studies in cultural change 2), Leuven 2002, 191–204, 200.

⁴⁴ See M. Conterno, *La "descrizione dei tempi" all'alba dell'espansione islamica. Un'indagine sulla storiografia greca, siriana e araba fra VII e VIII secolo* (Millennium-Studien 47), Berlin; Boston 2014, 5–7. Theophanes' account of the development of the monothelete controversy is at moments very close to the Greek *Vita* of Maximus, the *Synodicon Vetus* and Anastasius' *Homily*, suggesting that he used a written source that had drawn from these or from excerpts of them.

⁴⁵ See for example L. Van Hoof/P. Manafis/P. Van Nuffelen, *Philo of Carpasia. Ecclesiastical history* (CPG 7512), *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 112:1–2 (2017), 35–52, 48–49.

man of arms as a former general and the integrity of a monk of great pastoral concern.⁴⁶ In short, he was Procopius and Moschus combined.

Identity issues

The Arab conquests did not alter the Christian representation of a world in which human beings were either pagans, Jews or Christians, and the earliest references to Muslims did not place them consistently in any category. The scant and cursory details fit in the imprecise ethnographic curiosity of Herodotean historiography.⁴⁷ Terms such as ‘Saracens’, ‘Hagarenes’, ‘Arabs’, as well as ‘barbarians’, ‘Jews’, ‘gentiles’ and of non-orthodox Christian communities were used unsystematically.⁴⁸ In political

46 On the tentative identification with a monk Anastasius who had been the general Bahan, of Armenian origin, until being defeated by Arabs, attested in the first half of the tenth century in the *Annals* of Saʿīd b. Baṭrīq see S.H. Griffith, Anastasius of Sinai, the Hodegos and the Muslims, *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 32 (1987), 341–358, 343–344, and Uthemann, *Anastasios Sinaites* (as footnote 8), 347–349. The despair of a general when faced with the Arab power and other biographical *topoi* can be better understood when read together with similar passages in Theophanes, in which they reflect oral stories linked to characters such as Heraclius, as discussed in M. Conterno, ‘Storytelling’ and ‘History writing’ in seventh-century Near East, *Working Papers de la Fondation Maison des Science de l’Homme* 80 (2014), 9.

47 See T. Berzon, *Classifying Christians. Ethnography, heresiology, and the limits of knowledge in late antiquity*, Oakland, CA 2016, 17 on Herodotus’ relevance in the literary expression of late-antique ethnographic curiosity. As discussed in the contributions by E. Muehlberger, B. H. Dunning, M. Balberg and the responses of the author in the forum H. Wendt, *Classifying Christians. An AJR Forum*, *Ancient Jew Review* #AARSBL17 (2018), the *longue durée* approach of this study extrapolates from a type of polemical literature claims about the semantic and ontological relevance of ethnography in Late Antiquity that do not take into account the scientific discourses and the historical evidence of multi- and intercultural practices, such as discussed by Y. Minets, Xenolalia in Christian literature of late antiquity, in: T. Denecker/M. Lamberigts/G. Partoens/P. Swiggers/T. Van Hal (eds), *Language and Culture in Early Christianity: A Companion*, Leuven forth. See also on the role of ancient ethnography in shaping Christian chronology and historiography and in the formation of specific Christian fields of knowledge, respectively A. Kaldellis, *Ethnography after antiquity. Foreign lands and peoples in Byzantine literature* (Empire and after), Philadelphia 2013, 1–25, 64 and H. Inglebert, *Interpretatio Christiana. Les mutations des savoirs (cosmographie, géographie, ethnographie, histoire) dans l’antiquité chrétienne (30–630 après J.-C.)* (Collection des études augustinienes 166), Paris 2001. On the reliability of the ethnographic information see G. Greatrex, Procopius’ attitude towards Barbarians, in: G. Greatrex/S. Janiard/J. King (eds), *Le monde de Procope. The world of Procopius* (Orient & méditerranée 28), Paris 2018, 327–354, 329–330. On the reception of the views first attested in Sozomen, see Neil, Theophanes (as in footnote 3).

48 See F.M. Donner, Talking about Islam’s origins, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 81:1 (2018), 1–23, 15–18, A. Cameron, Jews and heretics. A category error, in: A.H. Becker/A.Y. Reed (eds), *The ways that never parted. Jews and Christians in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages* (Texts and studies in ancient Judaism 95), Tübingen 2003, 345–360, F. Millar, Rome’s ›Arab‹ Allies in Late Antiquity. Conceptions and Representations from within the Frontiers of the Empire, in: H. Börm/J. Wie-

terms, they were usually treated as non-Christians outsiders or invaders, that is, not as Christian heretics nor as Jews. In religious terms, they were often equated with pagans who had not taken up Christianity and to Jews, not least because of the usual imprecise patterns of their ethnography.⁴⁹ In polemic literature against Romans and non-orthodox Christians, who were accused of having facilitated the expansion and of collaborating with non-Christian rule, they were also equated with non-Christians characters of eschatological narratives.

The brief references in Christian sources do not do justice to the complex cultural situation of the 'Arab tribes', which is a significant misnomer of their socio-political organisation and interaction with other people.⁵⁰ Their identity was not coherent and the historical information that can be drawn from the sources refers at best to some aspects of a few pre-Islamic Arabs. While it was well known that some groups were baptised Christians or espoused judaeo-christianising or Manichaean beliefs, Christian Arabs were also present in non-Christian areas. The evidence for this is often found together with signs of 'romanisation', that is, attempts to master the skills needed to engage with the Roman administration.⁵¹ This is reflected in Maximus' and

sehöfer (eds), *Commutatio et contentio. Studies in the late Roman, Sasanian and early Islamic Near East. In memory of Zeev Rubin* (Reihe Geschichte 3), Düsseldorf 2010, 199–226, 201, D. Caner/S.P. Brock/R.-M. Price/K.T. Van Bladel, *History and hagiography from the late Antique Sinai. Including translations of Pseudo-Nilus' Narrations, Ammonius' Report on the slaughter of the monks of Sinai and Rhaithou, and Anastasius of Sinai's Tales of the Sinai Fathers* (Translated texts for historians 53), Liverpool 2010, 39–51 and D.M. Freidenreich, Muslims in canon law, ca. 650–1000, in: D. Thomas/B. Roggema (eds), 600–900. *Christian-Muslim relations. A.J.H.F. bibliographical history* 1, Leiden/Boston 2009, 83–98.

⁴⁹ The numerous ethnographic descriptions of Arabs seem to be the result of critical stances to earlier accounts circulating as living texts. Compare with the varied representations of Germanic people in Greek historiography, on which see Meier, Attila (as footnote 2), 346–348.

⁵⁰ Most fifth-century Arab groups did not identify themselves as tribes or in terms of lineage, but some leaders stood out from what Roman sources describe vaguely as Saracens or Ishmaelites. See I. Lindstedt, Who is in, who is out? Early Muslim identity through epigraphy and theory, *Jerusalem studies in Arabic and Islam* 46 (2019), 147–246, H. Elton, Writing the Histories of Romans and Arabs in the Fifth-Century Roman East, in: J.H.F. Dijkstra/G. Fisher (eds), *Inside and out. Interactions between Rome and the peoples on the Arabian and Egyptian frontiers in Late Antiquity* (Late antique history and religion 8), Leuven 2014, 235–248, 242–245, M. Robinson, From Traders to Caliphs: Prosopography, Geography and the Marriages of Muḥammad's Tribe, *Al-Masāq* 28:1 (2016), 22–35, 31–34, F. Millar, The Theodosian Empire (408–450) and the Arabs: Saracens or Ishmaelites?, in: E.S. Gruen (ed.), *Cultural borrowings and ethnic appropriations in antiquity* (Oriens et occidentis 8), Stuttgart 2005, 297–314, idem, Rome (as footnote 48), 202–204 and also M.P. Penn, *Envisioning Islam. Syriac Christianity and early Muslim world* (Divinations), Philadelphia 2015, 86–88.

⁵¹ See G. Fisher, From Mavia to al-Mundhir. Arab Christians and Arab Tribes in the Late Antique Near East, in: K. Dmitriev/I. Toral-Niehoff (eds), *Religious culture in late antique Arabia. Selected studies on the late antique religious mind* (Islamic history and thought 6), Piscataway, NJ 2017, 165–218, 198–203, E.K. Fowden, Schreine und Banner. Paläomuslime und ihr materielles Erbe, in: A. Neuwirth/N. Schmidt/N.K. Schmid (eds), *Denkraum Spätantike. Reflexionen von Antiken im Umfeld des Koran* (Episteme in Bewegung. Beiträge zu einer transdisziplinären Wissensgeschichte 5), Wiesbaden 2016,

especially in Anastasius' rhetoric that conversion went hand in hand with becoming part of the Roman Empire. At the same time, it is clear and widely accepted that the characterisation of the invaders in the Christian sources, especially in the Anastasiana, shows awareness of some religious and administrative features of Islam.⁵² Imprecisions tended to be ascribed to shortcomings in the resources and methods of late-antique authors, but recent scholarship has shown that Muslim identity developed over time and during the initial attacks would not have been particularly conspicuous in the panoply of monotheistic beliefs and life-orientations of Arabia, North Africa and the Near East.⁵³

Literary sources do not do justice to the numerous links and contacts between Arabs and Romans, both in the provinces and in the central administration, who could thus be well informed about them. For example, Arabs living near or within reach of Christian ascetics, monasteries and other charitable institutions resorted to

405–30, 411–413, P. Wood, 'We Have No King but Christ': *Christian Political Thought in Greater Syria on the Eve of the Arab Conquest (c.400–585)* (Oxford studies in Byzantium) Oxford 2010, 230–252 but also C.J. Robin, Ḥimyar, Aksum, and Arabia Deserta in Late Antiquity: The Epigraphic Evidence, in: G. Fisher (ed.), *Arabs and empires before Islam*, Oxford 2015, 127–171 (for example at 153–4).

52 See A.M. Guenther, The Christian experience and interpretation of the early Muslim conquest and rule, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 10:3 (1999), 363–378, 369–370 and Griffith, Anastasius (as footnote 47), but also D.J. Sahas, The seventh century in Byzantine-Muslim relations: Characteristics and forces, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 2:1 (1991), 3–22, 11.

53 See F.M. Donner, Qur'ānicization of Religio-Political Discourse in the Umayyad Period, A. Borrut (ed.), *Écriture de l'histoire et processus de canonisation dans les premiers siècles de l'islam. Hommage à Alfred-Louis de Prémare* (Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée. Série histoire 129), Aix-en-Provence 2011, 79–92, 86–88, F.M. Donner, *Muhammad and the believers. At the origins of Islam*, Cambridge, MA/London 2010, A. a. Azme, *The emergence of Islam in late antiquity. Allāh and his people*, Cambridge 2014, A.-M. Mohammad-Ali, Muhammad the Paraclete and 'Alī the Messiah: New Remarks on the Origins of Islam and of Shi'ite Imamology, *Der Islam* 95 (2018), 30–64, R.G. Hoyland, *In God's path. The Arab conquests and the creation of an Islamic empire* (Ancient warfare and civilization), Oxford/New York 2015, 12–21, W. al Qāḍī, Non-Muslims in the Muslim Conquest Army in Early Islam, in: A. Borrut/F. M. Donner (eds), *Christians and others in the Umayyad state* (Late antique and medieval Islamic Near East 1), Chicago, IL 2016, 83–128 and P.v. Sivers, Prophecies Fulfilled: The Qur'anic Arabs in the Early 600s, in: M.B. Mortensen/G. Dye/I.W. Oliver/T. Tesei (eds), *The Study of Islamic Origins: New Perspectives and Contexts* (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – Tension, Transmission, Transformation 15), Berlin/Boston 2021, 231–258. C. C. Sahner, Review of "A Prophet has Appeared: The Rise of Islam through Christian and Jewish Eyes, A Sourcebook", by S. J. Shoemaker, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 81:1 (2022), 225–227 and V. Grasso, The Gods of the Qur'ān: The Rise of Henotheism during Late Antiquity, in: Mortensen/Dye/Oliver/Tesei, *Study* (as this footnote), 297–324, 297–300 discuss the skepticism about Muslim literary sources on early Islam advocated, especially in the last half century, by several scholars, and show that in the search for alternative bodies of evidence, Greek Christian and Jewish texts have often been given credence uncritically, in spite of growing evidence that authorial intent, questions of worldview, and of creative re-elaboration of existing literature has to be reckoned with also in their study.

them or let themselves be influenced by them quite regularly.⁵⁴ Arabs also participated in several commercial networks, including the important Transsaharan routes. They contributed to important empire-wide markets, and had contacts in the provincial capitals.⁵⁵ Even the targets of Arab raiders were in part chosen in view of treaties and agreements with empires as well as local groups which were opposed to specific sites and people according to their religious identity as, for example, Monophysites, Origenists, Nestorians, Chalcedonians, Neo-Chalcedonians and Severans.⁵⁶ The refer-

54 See especially Fisher, *From Mavia* (as footnote 51), and P. Wood, Christianity and the Arabs in the Sixth Century, in: Dijkstra/Fisher (as footnote 50), 355–370, but also N. Lenski, Captivity and Slavery among the Saracens in Late Antiquity (ca. 250–630 CE), *Antiquité Tardive* 19 (2011), 237–266, 251–253, D. Frankfurter, Syncretism and the Holy Man in Late Antique Egypt, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11:3 (2003), 339–385, 382, G. Fisher, Rome and the Ghassānids: Comparative Perspectives on Conversion, Boundaries and Power in Near Eastern Borderlands, in: E.B. Aitken/J.M.F. Dèsl/G. Kellaris/J. Keiser/R. Bailey/G. Gauvin (eds), *The Levant: Crossroads of Late Antiquity. History Religion and Archaeology*, Leiden 2014, 273–291, 277–279, K.C. Britt, Through a Glass Brightly: Christian Communities in Palestine and Arabia During the Early Islamic Period, in: G. Mohammad (ed.), *Sacred Precincts. The Religious Architecture of Non-Muslim Communities across the Islamic World* (Arts and Archaeology of the Islamic World 3), Leiden 2014, 257–276, 270. The literary, epigraphic and visual evidence of Arabic relations with Christianity is compiled and analysed in the collective chapter G. Fisher/P. Wood/G. Bevan/G. Greatrex/B. Hamarneh/P. Schadler/W. Ward, Arabs and Christianity, in: Fisher, *Arabs* (as footnote 51), 276–272.

55 See M. Le Roux, Pre-Islamic Arabic Trade and Religion on the East Coast of Africa, in: N.A. Jallad (ed.), *People from the desert. Pre-Islamic Arabs in history and culture. Selected essays* (Textualia 2), Wiesbaden 2012, 107–128, A. Haour, What made Islamic Trade Distinctive, as Compared to Pre-Islamic Trade?, in: D.J. Mattingly/V. Leitch/C.N. Duckworth/A. Cuénod/M. Sterry/F. Cole (eds), *Trade in the ancient Sahara and beyond*, Cambridge 2017, 80–100, A. Wilson, Trade across Rome's Southern Frontier: The Sahara and the Garamantes, in: A. Wilson/A. Bowman (eds), *Trade, Commerce, and the State in the Roman World* (Oxford studies on the Roman economy), Oxford; New York 2017, 599–625 (and other chapters in the same volume) and S. K. McIntosh, Long-Distance Exchange and Urban Trajectories in the First Millennium AD: Case Studies from the Middle Niger and Middle Senegal River Valleys, in: M. Sterry/D. J. Mattingly (eds), *Urbanisation and State Formation in the Ancient Sahara and Beyond* (Trans-Saharan Archaeology 3), Cambridge 2020, 521–563.

56 On intra-Christian violence see G. Greatrex, The Emperor, the People and Urban Violence in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries, in: J. H. F. Dijkstra/C. R. Raschle (eds), *Religious Violence in the Ancient World: From Classical Athens to Late Antiquity*, Cambridge 2020, 389–405, idem, Moines, militaires et défense de la frontière orientale au VI^e s., in: A.S. Lewin/P. Pellegrini/Z.T. Fiema/S. Janniard (eds), *The late Roman Army in the Near East from Diocletian to the Arab Conquest. Proceedings of a colloquium held at Potenza, Acerenza and Matera, Italy (May 2005)* (BAR 1717), Oxford 2007, 285–298, S. Janniard, Les empereurs chrétiens et l'usage de l'armée pour réprimer les déviances religieuses aux IV^e et V^e siècles, in: H. Inglebert/S. Destephen/B. Dumézil (eds), *Le Prince chrétien. De Constantin aux royautés barbares (IV^e–VIII^e siècle)* (Travaux et mémoires. Centre de recherche d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance 22/1), Paris 2018, 399–413, and R. Pfeilschifter, *Der Kaiser und Konstantinopel. Kommunikation und Konfliktaustrag in einer spätantiken Metropole* (Millennium-Studien 44), Berlin 2013, 399–415, 604–605. Rather than mental borders, as suggested by modern readings of late-antique literature, frontiers were not only a defensive system and military barrier, but especially a dynamic and permeable zone of contact, which scholars nowadays refer to as *limes*, on which see Mayerson, Saracens and

ences to Arab-related historical events by Sophronius, Maximus and the redactor Anastasius would have taken into account that their public probably was aware that in the previous century Arab violence had to some extent targeted Christians according to their confession.

The scarcity of information about the Arabs before and during the initial phases of their expansion reflects the selective use of a linguistic and semiotic code which was for all late-antique cultures non-idiomatic and accessible only to an educated minority. Its prestige, and the value of writing as a memorialisation relevant for institutionalisation of identity is reflected in the development of a canonical Muslim religious compilation.⁵⁷ Its association to Roman rule becomes clear in contexts in which this was disavowed, rejected or had become de facto irrelevant. This is shown by the linguistic shifts in Egyptian legal documents and Syriac Christian literature. Authors or matters whose reputation or recognition according to the values and norms of the Roman Empire and Graeco-Roman culture were not meaningful did not need to be committed to writing, at least not in Greek.⁵⁸ The clear-cut religious identities found in the literature in *linguae francae* such as Greek, Latin and Syriac were a conse-

Romans (as footnote 11), J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, Nomads, Phylarchs and Settlement in Syria and Palestine, in: A.S. Lewin/P. Pellegrini (eds), *Settlements and demography in the Near East in Late Antiquity. Proceedings of the colloquium, Matera 27–29 October 2005* (Biblioteca di Mediterraneo antico 2), Pisa; Roma 2006, 131–145, idem, Arab Tribesmen (as footnote 11), 71 – both reprinted in idem, *East and West in late antiquity. Invasion, settlement, ethnogenesis and conflicts of religion* (Impact of Empire 20), Leiden 2015 – and K.M. Klein, Marauders, Daredevils, and Noble Savages: Perceptions of Arab Nomads in Late Antique Hagiography, *Der Islam* 92:1 (2015), 13–41, 28–29.

57 See especially A. Neuwirth, Locating the Qur'an and Early Islam in the 'Epistemic Space' of Late Antiquity, in: C. Bakchos/M. Cook (eds), *Islam and its past. Jahiliyya, late antiquity, and the Qur'an* (Oxford studies in the Abrahamic religions), New York/Oxford 2017, 165–185, 166–168 and on oral intertextuality see S.H. Griffith, When Did the Bible Become an Arabic Scripture?, *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 1:1–2 (2013), 7–23. On incorporation of writing into Arabic oral culture, types of compilation, and the varying recognition or neglect of the relevant of pre-Islamic material according to genre, see J.E. Montgomery, Abū Nuwās, The Justified Sinner?, *Oriens* 39:1 (2011), 75–164 (especially 80–82), C. Gilliot, Le Coran, production littéraire de l'Antiquité tardive ou Mahomet interprète dans le "lectionnaire arabe" de La Mecque, in: Borrut, *Écriture* (as footnote 53), 31–56, and V. Grasso, *Pre-Islamic Arabia: Societies, Politics, Cults and Identities during Late Antiquity*, Cambridge 2023, 172–191. The pervasiveness of non-citational Qur'ānic material in the early Arabic orations shows the extent to which much of the style and content of the Qur'an is not specifically Qur'ānic, rather, part of the seventh-century regional oral culture, unspecific to any tribe or ethnicity, and sharing many characteristics with linguistic and cultural practices with which it overlaps or is connected. See T. Qutbuddin, Qur'an Citation in Early Arabic Oration (Khutba). Mnemonic, Liturgical and Testimonial Functions, in: N. Al-Sha'ar (ed.), *The Qur'an and adab. The shaping of literary traditions in classical Islam* (Qur'anic studies series 16), Oxford 2017, 315–340, which takes for granted the preexistence of the Qur'an when the early orations were entextualised.

58 See A. King, Logic in the Service of Ancient Eastern Christianity: An Exploration of Motives, *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 97:1 (2015), 1–33, J. Tannous, You Are What You Read: Qenneshre and the Miaphysite Church in the Seventh Century, in: Wood, *History and identity* (as footnote 33), 83–102.

quence of the discursive option of the (oral or textual) hagiographers, hymnographers, homilists, historiographers who created Lives and other foundational narratives, and even more of the authors who incorporated them into their works in those *linguae francae*, possibly as a deliberate option for a cultural and political identity.⁵⁹

In the sixth century, more Arabs defined their identities both internally as well as in their relation to external powers whose influence was felt in the region. Adapting more or less specific Christian or imperial identities helped some Arab leaders to gain prestige, wealth and inter-tribal ascendancy.⁶⁰ However, their political allegiances shifted often and they remained religiously diverse. The changing patterns exposed Christian who established links with them to inter- and intra-tribal rivalries. The narratives about Arab involvement as patrons of Christianity reflect the fragmentation of agency, with local, often non-Roman or anti-imperial, groups taking on roles which had developed as Christian aspects of imperial identity in the Roman Empire. Beyond the interests of the leaders, the development of Arab culture continued to reflect the sixth-century closeness and contact with groups under Roman and Persian rule, including a tradition of narratives about religious wisdom, messianism and discipleship. This contributed to regional differences which are reflected, for example, in the Names of God used in Muslim texts.⁶¹

Religious narratives about Muḥammad were expressed in already existing styles, previously used for wisdom literature and sayings about a God. However, cultural memory of him also included narratives in styles which until then had not been cho-

59 See Booth, Circle (as footnote 13), 53, M. Debié, *L'écriture de l'histoire en syriaque: Transmissions interculturelles et constructions identitaires entre hellénisme et islam. Avec des répertoires des textes historiographiques en annexe* (Late Antique History and Religion 12), Leuven 2015, 440–475, J. Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East. Religion, Society, and Simple Believers*, Princeton, N.J. 2018, 172–180 and Papaconstantinou, Saints (as footnote 41).

60 See Fisher, From Mavia (as footnote 51), 179–180, 197–203, Wood, Christianity (as footnote 54), 360–361, G. Fisher, Kingdoms or Dynasties? Arabs, History, and Identity before Islam, *Journal of Late Antiquity* 4:2 (2011), 245–267, G. Fisher/P. Wood, Writing the History of the “Persian Arabs”. The Pre-Islamic Perspective on the “Naṣrids” of al-Ḥīrah, *Iranian Studies* 49:2 (2016), 247–290, C. J. Robin, Naḡrān vers l'époque du massacre: notes sur l'histoire politique, économique et institutionnelle et sur l'introduction du christianisme (avec un réexamen du *Martyr d'Azqir*), in: J. Beaucamp/F. Briquel-Chatonnet/C.-J. Robin (eds), *Juifs et chrétiens en Arabie aux V^e et VI^e siècles: Regards croisés sur les sources*, Paris 2010, 39–106, and A.W. Hughes, South Arabian ‘Judaism’, Himyarite Raḥmanism, and the Origins of Islam, in: C.A. Segovia (ed.), *Remapping Emergent Islam: Texts, Social Settings, and Ideological Trajectories* (Social worlds of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages 5), Amsterdam 2020, 15–44.

61 See Grasso, Gods (as footnote 53), 314. See also Donner in this volume, P. Crone, Pagan Arabs as God-fearers, in: Bakhos/Cook, *Islam* (as footnote 57), 140–164, 142–143, D.A. Beck, The Astral Messenger, The Lunar Revelation, The Solar Salvation: Dualist Cosmic Soteriology in The Early Qurʾān, in: Segovia, *Remapping* (as preceding footnote), 85–110, and G. Fowden, *Before and after Muḥammad. The first millennium refocused*, Princeton, NJ 2014.

sen for consolidation in writing.⁶² The option to write down religious content on Muhammad in part reflected awareness of the status of writings and their discursive patterns in the Roman Empire. For example, familiar legal writing present in Roman Law which was used in those regions may have contributed to Surahs being transferred to writing and collected in a format that resembles that type.⁶³ Contemporary observers of early Islamic religious and political discourses would have been faced with a considerable variety of narratives reflecting their diverse origins, and would have noticed little or nothing remarkably different from pre-Islamic culture.⁶⁴ The ab-

62 See A. Neuwirth, The Qur'ān's Enchantment of the World, in: Daneshgar/Saleh, *Islamic Studies* (as footnote 37), 123–144, 135 on the dialectic engagement with previous patterns of discourse, and on referentiality, textuality and the Qur'ānic Canonisation see A.S. Boisliveau, Canonisation du Coran ... par le Coran?, in: Borrut, *Écriture* (as footnote 53), 153–168, C. Gilliot, Oralité et écriture dans la genèse, la transmission et la fixation du Coran, in: P. Cassuto/P. Larcher (eds), *Oralité et écriture dans la Bible et le Coran (Actes du colloque d'Aix-en-Provence, IREMAM, 3–4 juin 2010)*. Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée. Série histoire 129), Aix-en-Provence 2011, 99–142, S.H. Griffith, Christians and the Arabic Qur'ān: Proof-texting, Polemics, and Intertwined Scriptures, *Intellectual History of the Islamic World* 2:1–2 (2014), 243–266 as well as the collected essays in A. Neuwirth, *Scripture, poetry, and the making of a community. Reading the Qur'an as a literary text* (Qur'anic studies series 10), Oxford 2014, Bakhtos/Cook, *Islam* (as footnote 57) and Mortensen/Dye/Oliver/Tesei, *Study* (as footnote 53).

63 See A. Kaplony, Comparing Qur'ānic Suras with Pre-800 Documents, *Der Islam*, 95:2 (2018), 312–366. For a more standard account, which minimises the continuity with pre-Islamic wisdom, cultural and legal practice see U.F.A.-A. Wymann-Landgraf, *Mālik and Medina. Islamic legal reasoning in the formative period* (Islamic history and civilization 101), Leiden/Boston 2013, 41–42. On the challenges presented by research of the Qur'ān, especially of its literary aspects, see N. Sinai, Review Essay: 'Going Round in Circles': Michel Cuyppers, The Composition of the Qur'an: Rhetorical Analysis, and Raymond Farrin, Structure and Qur'ānic Interpretation: A Study of Symmetry and Coherence in Islam's Holy Text, *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 19:2 (2017), 106–122, T. Zadeh, Quranic Studies and the Literary Turn, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 135:2 (2015), 329–342, A. Neuwirth, Ein Versuch der historischen und forschungsgeschichtlichen Verortung des Koran. Korangeschichtliche Einführung in: *Studien zur Komposition der mekkanischen Suren. Die literarische Form des Koran – ein Zeugnis seiner Historizität?*, 2nd rev. ed. (Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des islamischen Orients N.F. 10), Berlin/New York 2007, 1*–54*, 5*–6*, with references to P. Crone, *Roman, provincial and Islamic law. The origins of the Islamic patronate* (Cambridge studies in Islamic civilization), Cambridge 1987 and F.M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic origins. The beginnings of Islamic historical writing* (Studies in late antiquity and early Islam 14), Princeton, NJ 1998, 13, 16–17, 22.

64 See, for example, R. Hoyland, New documentary texts and the early Islamic state, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 69:3 (2006), 395–416, 409, C. Gilliot, Le Coran avant le Coran. Quelques réflexions sur le syncrétisme religieux en Arabie centrale, in: M. Azaiez/S. Mervin (eds), *Le Coran. Nouvelles approches*, Paris 2013, 145–187, Hughes, Messianism (as footnote 37), 148 and M. Meier, The Roman Context of Early Islam, *Millennium* 17:1 (2020), 265–302. Also later Islamic histories, such as by Ṭabarī and Badā'ūnī, Bīrūnī and Abū al-Faḍl, present very different types of religion, with both history and religion being a historically changing product of historiography, as discussed, for example, by S. Bashir, Everlasting Doubt. Uncertainty in Islamic Representations of the Past, *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 20:1 (2018), 25–44, 30. On case studies on earlier accounts in later works, see S. W. Anthony, *Muhammad and the Empires of Faith: The Making of the Prophet of Islam*, Berkeley 2020, for example at 103–110. Recent scholarship on Islamic historiography continues to raise signifi-

sence of a coherent identitarian discourse is reflected, for example, in the *surahs*, which were autonomous at first, and were edited and compiled only over time.⁶⁵ Once the interrelated development of Muslim tactical and ideological identity picked up – noticeable in its option for memorialising in writing military bodies, principles of property and political organisation, and canonising a compilation of *Surahs* –, the stance towards Roman identity and the adoption of Christian ways of life changed in the occupied and frontier areas. Reciprocally dichotomising formulation of Christian-Muslim social and religious identity picked up pace and increasingly resembled what had at first been a rhetorical ‘othering’ of the Arabs.⁶⁶ Later events contributed to make rhetorical *topoi*, accepted and interpreted by shared communicative expectations, seem plausible and accurate narratives of the past. Strategic political and military design which can be linked to processes of institutionalisation of Arab Muslim identity may have contributed for a few actions of great impact, especially in their historiographic representation, to become signs that the Arab world had the power to make true the worst stereotypes of religious destruction. However, the ongoing plausibility for readers of Greek in the Byzantine Empire and beyond its frontiers of texts that focus on coping rather than lamenting, such as the *Anastasiana*, shows that those actions and reasoning do not describe well early Arab control or the damage inflicted on Roman imperial identity.⁶⁷

Damage and conquest

The coexistence and the violence during the Arab conquest remained essentially similar to what cities, property and people had been experiencing in the vast area within

cant criticism, as discussed by Grasso, *Gods* (as footnote 53), Sahner, *Review* (as footnote 53) and A. a. Azme, *Review of “A Prophet Has Appeared: The Rise of Islam through Christian and Jewish Eyes. A Sourcebook”*, by S. J. Shoemaker, *Journal of Islamic Studies* 34:2 (2023), 250–253.

⁶⁵ See S.H. Griffith and S. Grebenstein, *Locating the Qur’an in the Epistemic Space of Late Antiquity*, in: S.H. Griffith and S. Grebenstein (eds), *Christsein in der islamischen Welt. Festschrift für Martin Tamcke zum 60. Geburtstag*, Wiesbaden 2015, 65–80, M. Sirry, *The Qur’an and Its Polemical Context: Between Chronological and Literary Approaches*, *Al-Bayan: Journal of Qur’an and Hadith Studies* 12:2 (2014), 115–132, and N. Sinai, *Fortschreibung und Auslegung. Studien zur frühen Koraninterpretation* (Diskurse der Arabistik 16), Wiesbaden 2009.

⁶⁶ See Donner, *Qur’anicization* (as footnote 53), N. Sinai, *Processes of Literary Growth and Editorial Expansion in Two Medinan Surahs*, in: Bakhos/Cook, *Islam* (as footnote 57), 69–119, 71–75, 102 and N. Sinai, *Two Types of Inner-Qur’anic Interpretation*, in: G. Tamer/R. Grundmann/A.E. Kattan/K. Pinggéra (eds), *Exegetical Crossroads: Understanding Scripture in Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the Pre-Modern Orient* (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – Tension, Transmission, Transformation 8), Berlin/Boston 2017, 53–288, 260.

⁶⁷ For a number of examples of coping and collaboration (largely taken at face value and no reference to the possibly polemic context) see al Qāḍī, *Non-Muslims* (as footnote 53), 110–111.

the reach of Arabs and the groups who would become their allies.⁶⁸ The shaping of group identities among the Arabs had been going on for some centuries and these processes speeded up with the Arab expansion. The changes in the organisation of the Arabs and the development of Muslim leaderships were reflected in the patterns of the aggressions against Christian institutions and people during the second wave of the early Arab expansion.⁶⁹ This built on the experience of the previous two centuries, when the targets of the attacks had been more and more chosen for their positioning within the complex landscape of Christian polemics and varying degrees of institutionalisation and assimilation into this imprecise concept of an 'Imperial Church'. The differences are more clearly seen in areas which had, until the first wave, little direct contact and in which, between the waves, the Arab presence was small, nominal or even non-existent, such as North Africa and Cyprus.

A case in point is a Greek inscription found in Cyprus, SEG 35:1469, which describes in some detail the losses caused during recent incursions before perpetuating Bishop John's euergetism.⁷⁰ The bottom of the first plaque is slightly damaged and the second considerably, but the focus on, respectively, lost human resources (l. 7–15) and measures to guarantee the infrastructure to resist future attacks (l. 16–21) is well preserved, as are the dates of both. The conquest of the island in 654/655 CE and the rebuilding of the church, presumably soon after the conquest, are the *terminus ante*

⁶⁸ On the archaeological evidence which runs counter the arguments of insecurity and helplessness see L. Zavagno, "Islands in the stream": toward a new history of the large islands of the Byzantine Mediterranean in the early Middle Ages ca.600–ca.800, *Mediterranean Historical Review* 33:2 (2018), 149–177, 153–155. See also R. Steinacher, When not in Rome, still do as the Romans do? Africa from 146 BCE to the 7th century, in: W. Pohl/C. Gantner/C. Grifoni/M. Pollheimer-Mohaupt (eds), *Transformations of Romanness: Early Medieval Regions and Identities* (Millennium-Studien zu Kultur und Geschichte des ersten Jahrtausends n. Chr. 71), Berlin 2018, 439–456, 456.

⁶⁹ See Donner, *Muhammad* (as footnote 53), especially 106, 144. On the considerable sense of continuity of daily life, local administration and place-based identities that can be observed in the Arab takeover of Egypt and the Near East as well as North Africa and the Iberian Peninsula, and the similarity to other such military conquests throughout ancient history, see P. Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim state. The world of a mid-eighth-century Egyptian official* (Oxford studies in Byzantium), Oxford 2013, 360, I. Marthot-Santaniello, Monastic Estates in Transition from Byzantine to Islamic Egypt: Evidence from Aphrodito, in: L. Blanke/J. Cromwell (eds), *Monastic Economies in Late Antique Egypt and Palestine*, Cambridge 2023, 76–98, 84–88, C. Fenwick, From Africa to Ifrīqiya: Settlement and Society in Early Medieval North Africa (650–800), *Al-Masāq* 25:1 (2013), 9–33, C. Fenwick, *Early Islamic North Africa: A New Perspective* (Debates in Archaeology), Bloomsbury, 2020, 31–43, E. Moreno, The Iberian Peninsula and North Africa, in: C.F. Robinson (ed.), *The Formation of the Islamic World Sixth to Eleventh Centuries* (The New Cambridge History of Islam 1), Cambridge 2010, 581–622, and Martínez Jiménez/Tejerizo-García, Assessing (as footnote 19).

⁷⁰ The text proposed by D. Feissel, Notes d'épigraphie chrétienne, *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 100:477–479 (1987), 347–387, 380–381 (=BE [1987] 532) (restor.) is available at <https://epigraphy.packhum.org/text/304018> and good quality images and a detailed review of the information available about the excavation and of previous publications can be found in D. Feissel, Jean de Soloi, un évêque chypriote au milieu du VII^e siècle, in: Zuckerman, *Constructing* (as footnote 15), 219–236, 227–230.

quem of the inscription, as discussed by D. Feissel, who proposed the following emendation:

(. . .) Ainsi donc, au temps de la septième indiction, l'an 365 de Dioclétien, eut lieu l'attaque contre l'île provoquée par nos péchés: beaucoup périrent et quelque 120 000 prisonniers sont déportés. à nouveau l'année l'île subit une autre agression plus lamentable encore, au cours de laquelle tombe sous le glaive un plus grand nombre que la première fois et quelque 50 000 prisonniers furent enlevés ainsi que quantité de (richesses ?); et (cette église) fut la proie des flammes avec tout l'évêché et (le . . .) des saints (. . .) et d'autres magnifiques (. . .) et maisons, et (comme en ?) d'autres endroits de l'île ledit incendie se produisit. Mais la grande bonté de Dieu, dans sa miséricorde, a bien voulu que cette église fût rénovée et a incité au zèle et à l'empressement son saint évêque Jean qui avec beaucoup d'ardeur (. . .), lui qui avec le concours de Dieu a restauré ses bâtiments écroulés, les a couverts et les a aménagés, et qui a achevé l'ouvrage à la gloire du Père et du Fils et du Saint-Esprit, dans la treizième indiction, l'an 371 selon Dioclétien.⁷¹

This inscription shows the extension of destruction during the Arab conquest of Cyprus, not in its narrative details,⁷² but in its very existence, as a material memorialisation of the past in Greek. Moreover, it displays the nod to the lingering value of Roman imperial identity of the wider *oikoumene* not least in its choice of calendar and the social, cultural and possibly political institutions which made it meaningful to set it up. The Diocletianic era is well attested throughout Late Antiquity in literature (especially in horoscopes and chronographies, such as the Index to Athanasius' *Festal letters*) and Hieratic, Demotic and Greek temple inscriptions and graffiti, and is first attested in documents in an Egyptian papyrus dated 656/657.⁷³ The use of this dating system on Cyprus in 671 shows the ongoing interconnectivity of the Mediterranean and confirms that the Diocletianic era was an alternative calendar founded on Roman imperial landmarks in areas which were not under the control of Constantinople.

⁷¹ See Feissel, Jean de Soloi (as preceding footnote).

⁷² See Flusin, Démons (as footnote 43), 385–386, 400–402, and especially Feissel, Jean de Soloi (as footnote 70), 227–34 for the reliability, as well as Feissel, Notes (as footnote 70), 441–442. Information and bibliography on the location of the inscription and the archaeological record of earlier churches can be found in L. Zavagno, 'A wonderful city of palms and dates': Salamis-Constantia in transition from Late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages (ca. 600–ca. 800 CE), *Mediterranean Historical Review* 29:2 (2014), 111–138, and, in darker tones, in M.J. Pawlowski, *An Examination of Middle Byzantine Reconstituted Churches in Cyprus*. Ph.D. thesis, UCL, London 2014. See also D. Summa, *The Christian Epigraphy of Cyprus: A Preliminary Study*, in *Early Christianity in Asia Minor and Cyprus* (Early Christianity in Asia Minor, Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity 109), Leiden 2019, 226–251, 237.

⁷³ See R. Bagnall/K. Worp, *Chronological Systems of Byzantine Egypt*, 2 ed. Leiden 2003, 63–64, J. Lempire, *Le calcul de la date de pâques dans les traités de S. Maxime le Confesseur et de Georges, moine et prêtre*, *Byzantion* 77 (2007), 267–304, 279–284 and Anthony, *Muhammad* (as footnote 64), 187–190. On the development of a Muslim calendar, see M. Shaddel, "The Year According to the Reckoning of the Believers": Papyrus Louvre inv. J. David-Weill 20 and the Origins of the *hijrī* Era, *Der Islam* 95:2 (2018), 291–311, 301–308, especially at p. 304.

In short, it shows the ongoing belonging to a Roman glocalism of the social groups behind the changing character of urban sites to polycentric but still coherent landscapes, in particular the Christian leaders who sponsored building activities.⁷⁴ Such a re-evaluation of the textual evidence is corroborated by recent archaeological results which show the availability of resources and deliberate planning on the part of local elites of defensive structures that speak against forced retreat of local populations behind hastily built or refurbished fortifications or the countryside. The restoration and erection of churches to *Theotokos Blachernitissa*, for example, attests the Romanness of the undertakings which indicate the importance of the city as a hub of Eastern Mediterranean pilgrimage routes.⁷⁵

References to Arab expansion over Cyprus occur also in the *Narrationes* by an Anastasius which Nau, Canart and others want to identify with Anastasius Sinaïticus. However, Uthemann and others argue that the identification is unwarranted. The wide range of views on historiography, *oikonomia*, worldly matters and the purity of faith in Anastasius Sinaïticus and Sophronius of Jerusalem are part of the literary and historical context in which the three groups of *Narrationes* were heard and read. Anastasius' homiletic focus on Arabic naval victories was not an acknowledgment of the 'verheerende arabische Eroberung', but a refutation of the imperial propaganda of prospects of peace, stability, faith and piety, in view of the quick reversal of the success over Persia and the increasing fragility of Heraclius' image.⁷⁶

Concluding remarks

This chapter has shown how the transmission of Anastasius' sayings, the memorialisation in writing of Muslim religious and military (hi)story and the justification of violence and rule on the basis of values, traditions and sayings which exist primarily in the very narratives attested in these writings show the characteristics of Arab-Roman dialogue from the late seventh or eighth centuries onwards. Early Byzantine perceptions of the first Muslim victories and especially the earliest Greek ecclesiastical references to the Arab expansion in which we think that something as momentous as the battle of Yarmuk happened indicate that, during the first wave of expansion, Arab

⁷⁴ Already before the Arab takeover most urban interventions were undertaken by local authorities, such as the ecclesiastic administration and private benefactors, as summarised in Zavagno, 'A wonderful city' (as footnote 72), 118–122. See also R. J. Lynch, Cyprus and Its Legal and Historiographical Significance in Early Islamic History, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 136:3 (2016), 535–550, 539–541.

⁷⁵ See the review article Zavagno, "Islands" (as footnote 68), 153–156.

⁷⁶ See Ohme, Bedeutung (as footnote 33), 35–36 and N. Viermann, The Battle of Yarmouk, a Bridge of Boats, and Heraclius's Alleged Fear of Water: Assessing the Consequences of Roman Military Defeat, *Studies in Late Antiquity* 5:2 (2021), 241–266, 265–266.

and Roman identities and engagement were more similar to what they had been in the previous decades than later sources state.⁷⁷ These reflect subsequent events and a rhetoric which ascribed to Islamic identity a continuity since inception, which found proof in representations filled with losses and turmoil, echoing narratives present across the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

The early Greek sources on the Arab expansion, especially on its earliest wave are largely laconic and unspecific. The battle of Yarmuk is as good as invisible. Until cross-regional political and legal structures were introduced in the areas which had been attacked, the Romanised part of the population saw themselves as living in an occupied part of the Roman Empire and not in an Arab world.⁷⁸ It was not clear that the border had shifted, rather, the frontier zones had become larger and it was a non-Roman season in them. When Greek 'ecclesiastic authors' contemporary to the Arab Conquests alluded to them, they did so only incidentally. Whether as contextualisation or as an agent in a narrative, they feature as variants of rhetorical topoi of othering.

During the first decades after Muḥammad's death, the actions and beliefs of Muslim Arabs and allied groups were not conspicuously different from the impression left by many North African and Near Eastern groups. The few passages which reflect this had a low-key transmission. The religious conception and the organisation of Islam changed over the next century factoring in religious discourses within Byzantium and confessional rhetoric in the occupied territories which related to them. This chapter has shown that from the perspective of the peoples in the territories and in the processes of Roman and early Muslim institutionalisation, the identity of Islam developed in ways which contributed decisively to the acceptance, as facts, of the stereotyped and ahistorical discourses used in Christian polemics to refer to the Arab expansion. By then they had enough in common with the perceived reality to be plausible accounts, by the editors of collections of conciliar documents, or the corpora of authors whose personae were increasingly fictional, as in the case of Anastasius of Sinai and Maximus the Confessor.⁷⁹

77 See for example Penn, *Envisioning* (as footnote 50), 24 and Zavagno, 'A wonderful city' (as footnote 72), 119. See especially P. Booth, The Muslim conquest of Egypt reconsidered, in: Zuckerman, *Constructing* (as footnote 15), 639–670, 666–669.

78 E. Keser-Kayaalp, Church Building in the Ṭur 'Abdin in the First Centuries of the Islamic Rule, in: A. Delattre/M. Legendre/P. Sijpesteijn (eds), *Authority and Control in the Countryside. From Antiquity to Islam in the Mediterranean and Near East (6th–10th Century)* (Leiden Studies in Islam and Society 9), Leiden 2018, 176–209, 176–178.

79 The research leading to these results has received support from St Edmund's College (Cambridge) and from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, within the framework of the research groups 'Religious individualization in historical perspective' (Erfurt) and 'Migration and Mobility in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages' (Tübingen), and of the Leibniz Prize research project 'Polyphony of Late Antique Christianity' (Frankfurt am Main). I thank Geoffrey Greatrex, Hartmut Leppin, Andrew Marsham and all present at the two conferences organised by the editors of this volume.



Part IV: **Realia**

Robert Schick

The Muslim conquest of southern Jordan and historical memory

Introduction

Southern Jordan was the first area outside of the Arabian Peninsula to come under Muslim rule in the early seventh century. This article reviews the initial course of events of the Muslim Conquest in southern Jordan, defined here as the area from the Wadi Mujib, marking the northern boundary of the Karak plateau, south to 'Aqaba and the Saudi border; that area formed the eastern half of the Byzantine Province of Third Palestine. This article starts with the Byzantine recovery after their defeat of the Sasanians in 628, followed by the Muslim raid to Dhāt Aṭlah in July 629, the battle of Mu'ta in September 629, the expedition of the Prophet Muḥammad to Tabūk from October 630 to January 631 and continues up to the main phase of the Conquest starting in early 634. The article also presents information about modern-day local Jordanian traditions of the Conquest and Muslim shrines that commemorate the events.

The Byzantine recovery

After the victory of the Emperor Heraclius over the Sasanians, in the course of the year 628, the Sasanians evacuated the territories they had conquered, and the Byzantines took over again. In southern Jordan the Byzantines ended up having less than six years to reestablish their authority before the start of the main phase of the Muslim Conquests in early 634.

The course of the Byzantine reestablishment of control in southern Jordan is obscure.¹ Our understanding of the situation is based primarily on inferences from the meager accounts by the Byzantine historian Theophanes and the Islamic sources about events during 8–9 AH/629–30 AD, connected with the initial phases of the Muslim Conquest.

One reference in a Byzantine source to the Byzantine reestablishment of control in southern Jordan comes in an account of Theophanes:

¹ R. Schick, Jordan on the Eve of the Muslim Conquest A.D. 602–634, in: P. Canivet/J.-P. Rey-Coquais (eds), *La Syrie de Byzance à l'Islam VIIe–VIIIe Siècles, Actes du Colloque International, 11–15 Septembre 1990*, Damascus 1992, 107–119; R. Schick, *The Christian Communities of Palestine from Byzantine to Islamic Rule: An Historical and Archaeological Study*, Princeton 1995.

Now some of the neighboring Arabs were receiving small payments from the emperors for guarding the approaches to the desert. At that time a certain eunuch arrived to distribute the wages of the soldiers, and when the Arabs came to receive their wages according to custom, the eunuch drove them away, saying 'The emperor can barely pay his soldiers their wages, much less these dogs!' Distressed by this, the Arabs went over to their fellow-tribesmen, and it was they that led them to the rich country of Gaza, which is the gateway to the desert in the direction of Mount Sinai.²

That report of Theophanes has been analyzed by Mayerson.³ When the episode of the eunuch not paying the Arabs their wages occurred is not stated explicitly, but it seemingly would have taken place a few years after the Battle of Mu'ta, in September 629, after enough years had passed since the Byzantine recovery for the payment to have become customary, so just prior to the Muslim capture of 634 seems right.

The raid to Dhāt al-Aṭlāḥ

The first recorded incident of the Muslim Conquest of southern Jordan is a raid that ended in disaster for the Muslims led by Ka'b b. 'Umayr al-Ghifārī in Rabi' I 8/July 629, two months before the Battle at Mu'ta in September. He led a raiding party of fifteen men who ended up at Dhāt al-Aṭlāḥ (Place of the Palm Trees, Fig. 1), south of Ghor al-Safi in the northern end of the Arabah Valley.

The raiders met a large group there, whom they invited to accept Islam. The group responded by shooting arrows at the Muslims, leading to a battle, in which all but one of the Muslims were killed. The one wounded survivor (see below for the discussion about Mu'ta) was able to get back to Medina to inform the Prophet Muḥammad of what had happened.⁴ The accounts by Ibn Ishāq⁵ and al-Ya'qūbī⁶ are very brief.

The fact that the clash took place here is connected in some way with the presence of a small Roman fort, Toloha, listed in the *Notitia Dignitatum* from the early

2 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor, Leipzig 1885, 335–336, trans. C. Mango/R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, Oxford 1997, 466.

3 P. Mayerson, The First Muslim Attacks on South Palestine (AD 633–634), *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 107, no. 2 (1964), 160–172.

4 Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, *Annales quos scripsit Abu Djafar Mohammed Ibn Djarir At-Tabari*, Leiden 1879–1901, vol. 1, 1601, trans. M. Fishbein, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Volume 8: The Victory of Islam*, Albany 1997, 143; Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-Wāqidi, *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*, ed. M. Jones, London 1966, vol. 2, 752; Abū al-Qāsim 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rikh Madīnat Dimashq*, 80 vols, Beirut 1995–2000, vol. 2, 5, vol. 50, 149–151.

5 Muḥammad Ibn Ishāq, *The Life of Muhammad*, trans. A. Guillaume, London 1995, 667.

6 Aḥmad b. Abi Ya'qūb al-Ya'qūbī, *Tārikh*, 2 vols, Beirut 1970, vol. 2, 75.

fifth century.⁷ The site is also mentioned as the Toloana, listed in the Beersheba tax edict from the sixth century as paying 15 solidi.⁸

Dhāt al-Aṭlāḥ would have only been recovered by the Byzantines after the Sasanian evacuation in 628, i.e. a year before the Muslim raid. The presence of a group who could defeat the Muslim raiders hints at some sort of garrison or Arab tribal presence there despite the disruptions between 614 and 628. After this clash, the site drops out of recorded history.

Dhāt al-Aṭlāḥ exists because of a perennial spring and consists of ruins of an ancient village, a small fort, a water reservoir with aqueducts, and field walls. Archaeological investigation of the site has been limited but has shown that the reservoir was built in the late sixth or early seventh centuries.⁹

A modern historical marker erected in 1986 commemorates the raid. The marker is located 1.5 km away from the site along the main Arabah Valley highway.



Fig. 1: The Modern Historical Marker for the Raid at Dhāt al-Aṭlāḥ (Photo by Robert Schick).

7 *Notitia Dignitatum*, ed. O. Seeck, Berlin 1876, Oriens 34, 34; L. Di Segni/Y. Tsafrir/J. Green, *The Onomasticon of Iudaea, Palaestina and Arabia in the Greek and Latin Sources, Volume I Introduction, Sources, Major Texts*, Jerusalem 2015, 245, 247.

8 L. Di Segni, The Beersheba Tax Edict Reconsidered in the Light of a Newly Discovered Fragment, *Scripta Classica Israelica* 23 (2004), 131–158, 152–153; Di Segni et al., *The Onomasticon of Iudaea, Palaestina and Arabia* (as preceding footnote) 302–303.

9 T. Niemi, Earthquakes at Qasr at-Tilah, in: T. Levy et al. (eds), *Crossing Jordan. North American Contributions to the Archaeology of Jordan*, London 2007, 409–416; B. MacDonald, *The Southern Ghors and Northeast 'Arabah Archaeological Survey*, Sheffield 1992, 105, 265; T. Weber-Karyotakis/A. Khammash, *Islamic Heritage Sites in Jordan. A Student's Gazetteer*, Amman 2020, 460, no. 391.

The diplomatic mission of al-Ḥārith b. 'Umayr al-Azdī

That first raid was soon followed by the much larger raid that culminated in the Battle at Mu'ta in September 629. The events leading up to the battle began in 8 AH/629 AD when the Prophet Muḥammad sent a messenger named al-Ḥārith b. 'Umayr al-Azdī to the Ghassanid governor in Busra in southern Syria (Fig. 2), who is also named al-Ḥārith, to invite him to accept Islam. When al-Ḥārith b. 'Umayr al-Azdī reached the town of Mu'ta in the south Karak Plateau, Shuraḥbīl b. 'Amr al-Ghassānī, one of al-Ḥārith's deputies, killed him. In response, the Prophet Muḥammad then organized the force that invaded southern Bilād al-Shām (Greater Syria) and met the Byzantines and their Arab tribal allies at the Battle of Mu'ta.

A modern tomb shrine for al-Ḥārith b. 'Umayr al-Azdī was built in 2006¹⁰ south of Tafilah, some 39 km south of Mu'ta. An earlier shrine here was called weli Hdēfe (Musil, AP 2.1 1907: 319, AP 2.2 1908: 241), named for an unidentified Shaykh Ḥāmid el-Hdēfe. Peake¹¹ in 1958 mentions it as "the grave of Hudeisa, one of the companions of the Prophet who fell at Dzat Atlah".

Kennedy¹² and MacDonald¹³ noted a square structure that was the shrine before the large modern-day shrine was built. An extensive archaeological site a couple hundred meters to the north remains uninvestigated.¹⁴

The change in the identification of the shrine from Shaykh Ḥāmid el-Hdēfe to al-Ḥārith b. 'Umayr al-Azdī must have taken place by the early 1990s, when the new name appears in the JADIS database published in 1994,¹⁵ but the reason for the change is unknown to me.

The expedition to Mu'ta

In response to the killing of al-Ḥārith b. 'Umayr al-Azdī, the Prophet Muḥammad organized a force of three thousand men to invade southern Bilād al-Shām in the year of 8 AH (= 1 May 629 – 19 April 630). The Byzantines and their Arab tribal allies gathered their forces and met the Muslim invaders at Mu'ta in September 629.

¹⁰ G. bin Mohammed/S. Wood (eds), *The Holy Sites of Jordan*, Amman 1996, 62; M. al-Wahīb, *Qal'at al-Tafila wa-Muḥīṭuhā al-Turāthī*, Amman 2014, 186–192.

¹¹ F. Peake, *A History of Jordan and Its Tribes*, Coral Gables 1958, 125, footnote 12.

¹² D. Kennedy, Gharandal Survey 1997: Air Photo Interpretation and Ground Verification, *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 42 (1998), 573–585, 576–577, no. 29.

¹³ B. MacDonald et al., *The Tafila-Busayra Archaeological Survey 1999–2001, West-Central Jordan*, Boston 2004, 280.

¹⁴ MacDonald et al., *Archaeological Survey* (as footnote 11), 280 TBAS, no. 001.

¹⁵ G. Palumbo, *The Jordan Archaeological Database and Information System (JADIS)*. Amman: Department of Antiquities / American Center of Oriental Research, page 241, no. 2101.021



Fig. 2: The Modern Shrine for al-Hārith b. 'Umayr al-Azdī (Photo by Robert Schick).

Along their route into southern Jordan, the Muslim force reached Ma'an, without any hint of meeting Byzantine resistance. Ibn Ishāq reports the following: after the Muslim force left Medina "they went on their way as far as Ma'an in Syria where they heard that Heraclius had come down to Ma'ab [Rabba] in the Balqa'. When the Muslims heard this they spent two nights at Ma'an pondering what to do."¹⁶

The account says nothing about a Byzantine ruler in Ma'an. This could indicate that the Byzantines had not yet reestablished their authority this far south, a year or so after the Sasanian evacuation in 628.

¹⁶ Ibn Ishāq, *The Life of Muhammad* (as footnote 5), 532.

Farwa b. 'Amr al-Judhāmī at Ma'ān and 'Afrā

It is not so clear how to reconcile the account of the Muslim forces passing through Ma'ān with the accounts about the year 9 AH (= 20 April 630 – 8 April 631) that mention Farwa b. 'Amr al-Judhāmī of the clan of Nufātha as the Byzantine governor of Ma'ān (Fig. 3). As Ibn Ishāq relates:

Farwa b. 'Amr b. al-Nāfira al-Judhāmī of the clan of Nufātha sent to the apostle that he had accepted Islam, and gave him a white mule. Farwa was governor for the Byzantines of the Arabs lying near the Byzantine border based on Ma'ān and the surrounding land of Syria. When the news reached the Byzantines they went after him, caught him, and imprisoned him. In his imprisonment he said: [12 lines of poetry omitted]. When the Byzantines determined to crucify him by a pool in Palestine called 'Afrā he said: [6 lines of poetry omitted]. Then they beheaded him and hung him up by that water. May God have mercy on him!¹⁷



Fig. 3: The Hot Springs of 'Afrā as Seen from the Byzantine Hermitage (Photo by Robert Schick).

¹⁷ Ibn Ishāq, *The Life of Muhammad* (as footnote 5), 644–645; also Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, eds E. Sachau et al., Leiden 1904–1940, vol. 1.2, 31; Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf*, ed. M. H. Allah, Cairo 1959, vol. 1, 510–511.

Donner speculates that Farwa would have turned to the Muslims during the Sasanian occupation of the area between 614 and 628 because of the Muslims' favorable treatment of Christians, and that the Byzantines then arrested him after they recovered the area following the Sasanian evacuation in 628.¹⁸ Another possibility is to associate Farwa's conversion with the Muslim raid to Mu'ta in September 629, and his arrest with the Byzantines establishing their presence in the area in the aftermath of the Muslim defeat. The Muslim accounts, however, date Farwa's conversion to the year 9 AH (= 20 April 630 – 8 April 631) disconnected with any other events.

'Afrā is the hot springs of Ḥammām 'Afrā on the south side of the Wadi Hasa where a Christian hermitage was located in the Byzantine period.¹⁹ A modern historical marker just before the entrance to the hot springs from the south commemorates Farwa's martyrdom.

The tree of Ja'far the flyer

As the Muslim raiders moved north from Ma'ān, one assumes that they would have followed the route of the King's Highway north to al-Ṭafilah and across the Wadi Hasa to the Karak Plateau up to Mu'ta. Water would have been available along that route, unlike farther to the east along the water-less desert route of the modern-day Hejaz Railway and Desert Highway.

Local tradition identifies a tree along the route of the King's Highway as the Tree of Ja'far the Flier (*Shajarat Ja'far al-Ṭayyār*, Fig. 4). That tree is south of the modern town of al-Qādisiyya near the boundary between the mountains of the southern Jibal district around al-Ṭafilah and the plateau of the northern Sharāt district around al-Shawbak. The tree is said to mark an encampment where Ja'far, the older brother of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, camped one night with the Muslim army on their way to the Battle of Mu'ta.

Musil²⁰ and Jaussen,²¹ who mentioned that the Arabs liked to pray there, seem to be the first ones to record the site, while Peake wrote: "it is said and seems more probable that it is called after one of the sheikhs of the Tayyar Section of the Wuld Ali, who rested there on his way back from a pilgrimage to Mecca."²² The isolated tree is

18 F. Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, Princeton 1981, 105, 109, 304.

19 B. MacDonald, The Hermitage of John the Abbot at Hammam 'Afra, Southern Jordan, *Liber Annuus* 30 (1980), 351–364; Weber-Karyotakis/Khammash, *Islamic Heritage Sites in Jordan* (as footnote 9), 20, site no. 12.

20 A. Musil, *Arabia Petraea III: Ethnologischer Reisebericht*, Vienna 1908, 87.

21 A. Jaussen, *Coutumes des Arabes au pays de Moab*, Paris 1908, 335.

22 Peake, *Jordan* (as footnote 13), 125, footnote 20.

enclosed by a modern stone wall, with other graves and traces of wall lines in the immediate vicinity. Findlater interpreted the site as a Roman road station.²³



Fig. 4: The Tree of Ja'far the Flyer (Photo by Robert Schick).

Mu'ta

The Muslim forces eventually reached the area of Mu'ta in the south Karak Plateau, where they first met Byzantine forces. How there happened to be substantial Byzantine forces here, and not anywhere further south, is obscure. The Battle of Mu'ta took place in September 629, some six months before the visit of the Emperor Heraclius to Jerusalem, apparently in March 630.²⁴ Theophanes wrote about the battle:

²³ G. Findlater, *Imperial Control in Roman and Byzantine Arabia. A Landscape Interpretation of Archaeological Evidence in Southern Jordan*, unpublished dissertation, University of Edinburgh 2003, 255, 258, 433: fig. 107, no. 114 (Shajarat Et-Tayara); Weber-Karyotakis/Khammash, *Islamic Heritage Sites in Jordan* (as footnote 9), 329, no. 277 (Qadisīya).

²⁴ H. Usener, *Acta martyris Anastasi Persae*, Bonn 1894, 12.

Mouamed, who had died earlier, had appointed four emirs to fight those members of the Arab nation who were Christians, and they came in front of a village called Mouchea, in which was stationed the *vicarius* Theodore, intending to fall upon the Arabs on the day when they sacrificed to their idols. The *vicarius*, on learning this from a certain Koraishite called Koutabas, who was in his pay, gathered all of the soldiers of the desert guard and after ascertaining from the Saracen the day and the hour when they were intending to attack, himself attacked them at a village called Mothous, and killed three emirs and the bulk of their army. One emir, called Chaled, whom they call God's Sword escaped.²⁵

Mouchea might be identifiable as the village of Miḥna (see below), 3.6 km northwest of Mu'ta, while Mothous is Mu'ta.

The Muslim historians report this battle in great detail.²⁶ The Muslim forces were defeated, and the three commanders were martyred in turn: Zayd b. Ḥāritha, the freed slave of the Prophet Muḥammad, and for a time his adopted son; Ja'far b. Abī Ṭālib, 'Alī's older brother, and 'Abd Allāh b. Rawāha. Khālīd b. al-Walīd was able to rally the Muslim survivors and return to Medina.

Ja'far became known as Ja'far al-Ṭayyār (Ja'far the Flyer), because when he was killed, the Prophet Muḥammad back in Medina had a vision of him with wings, whose forefeathers were stained with blood, flying with angels.²⁷

The locals, however, have an alternative story to explain the name. As recorded by Hornstein in September 1895,

At 9:15 we reached El Mesh'had, or the Place of Witness. It is an old ruin on the roadside and contains several Arabic inscriptions. The tradition among the Bedouin about this place is that the prophet Mohammed sent his cousin Ja'far with a large army against the Christians who lived in Moteh, a village to the right of the road, and a short distance from El Mesh'had. The prophet's army was defeated, and Ja'far fatally wounded. As the Christians surrounded him, he suddenly rose and flew across the plain to the top of a little hill, about three miles off to the south-west, where he died. His tomb is still to be seen. In consequence of this wonderful deed he is called "Ja'far el Taiyar" – Ja'far the Flyer. Ali Abu Talib, who was an eye witness, swears to the truth of it. Hence the name of the place from which he flew is called "El Mesh-had."²⁸

Jaussen recorded another version of that local story.²⁹ Ibn 'Asākir includes a long account of the battle,³⁰ along with lengthy biographies of the commanders 'Abd Allāh b. Rawāha,³¹ Zayd b. Ḥāritha b. Sharāḥīl³² and Khālīd b. al-Walīd,³³ but not Ja'far

25 Theophanes, *Chronographia* (as footnote 2), 335, trans. Mango/Scott, 466.

26 E.g. Ibn Ishāq, *The Life of Muhammad* (as footnote 5), 531–540.

27 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (as footnote 4), vol. 1, 1617, trans. Fishbein, 158–159.

28 C. Hornstein, A Visit to Kerak and Petra, *Palestine Exploration Quarterly Statement* (April 1898), 94–103, here 97.

29 Jaussen, *Coutumes des Arabes* (as footnote 20), 295.

30 Ibn 'Asākir *Ta'rikh Madīnat Dimashq* (as footnote 4), vol. 2, 5–21.

31 Ibn 'Asākir *Ta'rikh Madīnat Dimashq* (as footnote 4), vol. 28, 80–128.

32 Ibn 'Asākir *Ta'rikh Madīnat Dimashq* (as footnote 4), vol. 19, 342–374.

33 Ibn 'Asākir *Ta'rikh Madīnat Dimashq* (as footnote 4), vol. 16, 216–282.

b. Abī Ṭālib, as well as numerous short mentions of people who participated in the battle.³⁴ He identifies the Arab opponents in the battle as Christians.³⁵ Ibn ‘Asākir also mentions that the reason for the expedition of Usāma, the son of Zayd b. Ḥāritha, to Syria around the time of the Prophet Muḥammad’s death in 11 AH/632 AD³⁶ was to see the traces of the Mu’ta battle.

Mashhad

The site of the battle on the southern outskirts of the modern town of Mu’ta is given the name of Mashhad (Fig. 5) and is marked by a major shrine, apparently Mamluk in date, that has been excavated, although details are scarce.³⁷

Irby and Mangles in 1818 passed by the site of “Hamahta or Mote, which last name, signifying death, it acquired from the circumstance of all its inhabitants having been exterminated by Abou Taleb, whose reported tomb “Musshut” is a building upon arches which appears to stand in a small enclosure.”³⁸ Nomikos³⁹ and Savignac⁴⁰ are two other scholars who described the site in the early twentieth century.

The name is sometimes recorded as Mashhad ‘Alī, i.e. the martyrium of ‘Alī,⁴¹ even though the individual associated with the battle was not ‘Alī, but rather his older brother Ja’far who was killed in the battle.

The Arabic geographical and historical sources mention Mu’ta and nearby Mazār, where the shrine for the martyred commanders was built, in connection with the battle.⁴² For example, Mu’ta is listed as one of Ma’ab’s villages, where the tombs of Ja’far al-Ṭayyār and ‘Abd Allāh b. Rawāha are located, leaving out any mention of Zayd b. Ḥāritha.

³⁴ Ibn ‘Asākir *Ta’rikh Madīnat Dimashq* (as footnote 4), vol. 80, 642 Index.

³⁵ Ibn ‘Asākir *Ta’rikh Madīnat Dimashq* (as footnote 4), vol. 2, 15; vol. 28, 122.

³⁶ Ibn ‘Asākir *Ta’rikh Madīnat Dimashq* (as footnote 4), vol. 2: 46–60; 8: 64; 22: 3.

³⁷ Weber-Karyotakis/Khammash, *Islamic Heritage Sites in Jordan* (as footnote 9), 313–314, no. 267.

³⁸ C. L. Irby/J. Mangles, *Travels in Egypt and Nubia, Syria, and the Holy Land, including a journey round the Dead Sea, and through the country east of the Jordan*, London 1823, 371.

³⁹ Ch. A. Nomikos, Η μάχη των Μοθών και ο τάφος του Γκιόφαρελ Ταγιάρ, *Επετηρίς Εταιρείας Βυζαντινών Σπουδών* 3 (1926), 94–112, figs 2–3.

⁴⁰ R. Savignac, Sur les pistes de Transjordanie méridionale, *Revue Biblique* 45 (1936), 235–262, ηερε 247–248, fig. 7.

⁴¹ E.g. Jaussen, *Coutumes des Arabes* (as footnote 20), 295, 310, 335, 356.

⁴² G. Le Strange, *Palestine under the Moslems. A Description of Syria and the Holy Land from A.D. 650 to 1500. Translated from the Works of the Mediaeval Arab Geographers*, London 1890, 509–10; M. al-Rawāḍīya, *Mudawwana al-Nuṣūṣ al-Jughrāfiya li-Mudun al-Urdunn wa-Qurā’ihī*, Amman 2007, vol. 2, 410–416; Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Muqaddasī, *The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions*, trans. B. Collins, Reading 1994, 149.



Fig. 5: The Monument at the Battle Site of Mu'ta (Photo by Robert Schick).

In his *Kitāb al-Isharāt ilā Ma'rifat al-Ziyarāt*, Al-Harawī (d. 1215) mentions that “al-Ṭūr and Mu'ta are villages containing the tombs of Ja'far al-Ṭayyār b. Abī Ṭālib, Zayd b. Ḥāritha, 'Abd Allāh b. Rawāha, al-Ḥārith b. Nu'mān, Ḥunayf b. Riyāb, Zayd b. al-Khaṭṭāb, 'Abd Allāh b. Sahl, Sa'd b. 'Āmir b. al-Nu'mān al-Qaysī, Abū Dujāna Simāk, and a group of Companions who were killed there, among whom are those whose tombs are unknown. God knows best.”⁴³ However, it remains unclear from al-Harawī's reference to al-Ṭūr and Mu'ta whether the initial burial of the Muslims' bodies took place there before being relocated to the major shrine at Mazār established after al-Harawī's time.

Khirbat al-Ṭūr is the name of an archaeological site, surveyed by Miller⁴⁴ 1.3 km south of the Mashhad site and 1.7 km northeast of the Mazār shrines. It remains unstudied since Miller's survey, when he observed that “These prominent ruins cover an area ca. 112 x 220 m. . . . Many wall lines are exposed. . . . In places the rubble appears to be as much as 3 m deep.” Miller found pottery from throughout the Islamic periods.

⁴³ 'Alī b. Abī Bakr al-Harawī, *A Lonely Wayfarer's Guide to Pilgrimage*, trans. J. Meri, Princeton 2004, 37–39.

⁴⁴ J. M. Miller (ed.), *Archaeological Survey of the Kerak Plateau*, Atlanta 1991, 122, no. 312.

The village of Miḥna is built over an uninvestigated ancient site,⁴⁵ while the modern town of Mu'ta is also built over an ancient site,⁴⁶ about which nothing of interest is known beyond some early Christian Greek tombstones, the latest of which date to 606 and 652–653.

Mazār

Mazār is the major shrine for the graves of the Muslims killed in the battle of Mu'ta. Mazār is a modern name, replacing the earlier name of “Ja'far”. The shrine has been massively expanded in recent years into the largest of the tomb shrines in Jordan for the Companions of the Prophet Muḥammad.⁴⁷ The shrine is located 3 km south of the Mashhad battle site.

The shrine had a major building phase in the Mamluk period, datable by two dedicatory inscriptions to 1327 and 1351–1352.⁴⁸ The shrine became the leading Muslim pilgrimage shrine in Jordan. Musil⁴⁹ and Jaussen⁵⁰ described the annual pilgrimage festival there, while Nomikos⁵¹ and Savignac⁵² were among the first to describe the shrine.⁵³

The nature of the pre-Mamluk remains, however, is obscure. There seem to be no traces of any pre-Islamic site where the Muslim shrine now is.⁵⁴ Clermont-Ganneau reports a fragment of a Kufic inscription that was undated but was earlier than the other Mamluk inscriptions; he suggests a second century AH (= eighth century AD)

45 Miller (ed.), *Archaeological Survey of the Kerak Plateau* (as footnote 44), 113, no. 273; Weber-Karyotakis/Khammash, *Islamic Heritage Sites in Jordan* (as footnote 9), 299–300, no. 251.

46 Miller, *Archaeological Survey* (as footnote 43), 119–120, no. 304.

47 Bin Mohammed/Wood (eds), *Jordan* (as footnote 12), 56–59; Weber-Karyotakis/Khammash, *Islamic Heritage Sites in Jordan* (as footnote 9), 293–297, nos. 248 and 249.

48 S. al-Tall, Nuqūsh Islāmīya min Mazār Mu'ta, *Dirāsāt* 16, 11 (1989), 47–67; A. al-Nusūr, *Dalīl Mu'ta wa-al-Mazār*, Amman n.d., 54–55; M. S. G. al-Ṭarāwnah, *Tārīkh Minṭaqat al-Balqā' wa-Ma'ān wa-al-Karak 1281–1338 h./1864–1918 m.*, Amman 1992, 346–347; M. al-Mu'minī, Turbat Bahādir b. 'Abd Allāh al-Badrī fī Madīnat Mazār al-Janūbī – al-Karak – Dirāsa Athariya Mi'māriya, *Jordan Journal for History and Archaeology* 4 (2010), 139–170; Weber-Karyotakis/Khammash, *Islamic Heritage Sites in Jordan* (as footnote 9), 293 and 295, nos. 248 and 249.

49 A. Musil, *Arabia Petraea I: Moab*, Vienna 1907, 152.

50 Jaussen, *Coutumes des Arabes* (as footnote 20), 295–296.

51 Nomikos, Η μάχη των Μοθών (as footnote 38).

52 Savignac, Transjordanie méridionale (as footnote 39), 248–249.

53 See also al-Tall, Nuqūsh Islāmīya min Mazār Mu'ta (as footnote 47); al-Nusūr, *Dalīl Mu'ta wa-al-Mazār* (as footnote 47), 54–55; al-Ṭarāwnah, *Tārīkh Minṭaqat al-Balqā' wa-Ma'ān wa-al-Karak* (as footnote 47), 346–347; al-Mu'minī, Turbat (as footnote 47).

54 R. Canova, *Iscrizioni e Monumenti Protocristiani del Paese di Moab*, Vatican City 1954, 308–309; Miller, *Archaeological Survey* (as footnote 43), 122, no. 311.

date.⁵⁵ Three short Arabic inscriptions are datable on the basis of style to the Fatimid period (969–1171) and indicate that there was a shrine here earlier than the extant Mamluk shrine. The Shi'ite Fatimids would have been particularly interested in commemorating the burial place of Ja'far b. Abi Ṭālib, 'Alī's older brother.

The Christian 'Azīzāt tribe and the battle of Mu'ta

Tribal lore of the Christian 'Azīzāt/Uzayzāt tribe of Karak tells an unbelievable story about the Battle of Mu'ta in September 629. 'Abd al-Raḥmān, a Christian of Iraqi origin who had settled in Mu'ta, assisted the Muslims after their defeat and as a reward the Prophet called him 'Azīz (illustrious, honorable) and exempted him and his tribe from paying the *jizya* and *kharāj* taxes.⁵⁶ The standard biographies of the Prophet Muḥammad (i.e. contained in the works of Ibn Ishāq [in Ibn Hishām's recension], al-Ṭabarī, al-Balādhurī, al-Wāqidi, etc.) record nothing about this.

As told by Yūsuf S. al-'Azīzāt,⁵⁷ when 'Abd al-Raḥmān's family left Iraq, his brother Ṣaqr went to Mecca as a merchant and converted to Islam. Ṣaqr was the one survivor of the Muslim raid to Dhāt Aṭlāḥ and he was also part of the Muslim forces at Mu'ta. In the battle Ṣaqr was taken prisoner, while some of the other Muslims who were taken prisoner came into the hands of his brother 'Abd al-Raḥmān as booty. When some rabble attacked 'Abd al-Raḥmān's house and killed the prisoners, Ṣaqr informed 'Abd al-Raḥmān about this. Then, 'Abd al-Raḥmān became furious at the violation of his honor, offered help to the Muslim commander Khālīd b. al-Walīd to retreat after the Muslim defeat, and provided the Muslims with supplies. 'Abd al-Raḥmān additionally made a pledge to provide assistance to the Muslims if they ever return.

When the Prophet Muḥammad back in Medina heard of this, he said "Honor ('izzū) the man and honor his brother and everyone who seeks refuge with the two of them", which explains the origin of the tribe's name. The booty of his brother was also exempted from any claims.

At the time of the Muslim Conquests in the mid-630s, 'Abd al-Raḥmān (now called 'Azīz) was the commander of the local troops in Karak and he arranged the surrender of Karak to the Muslims, commanded by Khālīd b. al-Walīd.

The 'Azīzāt tribe claimed the following privileges: 1) honoring everyone who had a connection with 'Azīz, 2) exemption from the *jizya* and *kharāj* taxes, 3) restriction of

55 C. S. Clermont-Ganneau, Le tombeau de Dja'far, cousin-germain de Mahomet, *Recueil d'archeologie orientale* 3 (1900), 278–283, here 279.

56 Jaussen, *Coutumes des Arabes* (as footnote 20), 418; Yūsuf Salīm Shuwayḥāt al-'Azīzāt, *Al-'Azīzāt fī Mādabā*, Amman 1966, 18–20, 25–28.

57 Shuwayḥāt al-'Azīzāt, *Al-'Azīzāt fī Mādabā* (as footnote 56), 25–28.

leadership of Karak to his descendants, 4) prohibition against shooting in his presence.⁵⁸

Yūsuf S. al-ʿAzīzāt noted that the tribe did not have any documents supporting that story or confirming their privileges and he suggested that any such documents would have been lost during the devastations of the plague outbreak of 1814. He does not consider the alternative explanation that there were never any documents in the first place because the whole story is fiction.

Yūsuf S. al-ʿAzīzāt⁵⁹ considered Mu'ta to have been fortified and Rabba, the first place that surrendered to the Muslim invaders, to have been an unimportant village. He came to realize that Mu'ta was not fortified only after the book was printed (see his "corrections" on the last page).

In Jaussen's less elaborate version of the story,⁶⁰ ʿAzīz received his name from the Prophet after having opened the gates of the walled city of Mu'ta to the Muslim invaders in the mid-630s.

Peake also mentioned the story and stated about the ʿAzīzāt tribe, who were among the Christians from Karak who left and settled in Madaba in 1880–1881, that "The Azeizat are now a powerful faction in Madaba, and for nearly 1,300 years Muhammed's commands regarding them were obeyed, for they were not taxed by the Turks until after the Kerak rebellion of 1911. It seems more probable that the immunity from taxation, which these people enjoyed, was a concession made by Saladin when he wished to gain the help of the Arabs of Kerak against the Crusaders."⁶¹

The surrender of ʿAqaba

When the Prophet Muḥammad captured Tabūk (in northern Arabia some 260 km south-east of ʿAqaba and 300 km southeast of Udhruh) in late 9 AH (=early 630 AD), Yuḥanna b. Ru'ba went there from ʿAqaba to arrange the terms of surrender of the city.

The Arabic sources record in varying degrees of detail the terms of surrender that the Prophet Muḥammad reached with Yuḥanna. They identify Yuḥanna b. Ru'ba variously as the bishop, king "malik" or ruler "ṣāhib" of ʿAqaba. Ibn Ishāq's version is:

When the apostle reached Tabūk Yuḥanna b. Ru'ba governor of Ayla came and made a treaty with him and paid the poll tax. The people of Jarbā' and Adhruh also came and paid the poll tax. The apostle wrote for them a document which they still have.⁶²

⁵⁸ Shuwayḥāt al-ʿAzīzāt, *Al-ʿAzīzāt fī Mādabā* (as footnote 56), 29.

⁵⁹ Shuwayḥāt al-ʿAzīzāt, *Al-ʿAzīzāt fī Mādabā* (as footnote 56), 27–28.

⁶⁰ Jaussen, *Coutumes des Arabes* (as footnote 20), 418.

⁶¹ Peake, *Jordan* (as footnote 13), 176.

⁶² Ibn Ishāq, *The Life of Muhammad* (as footnote 5), 607.

Yuḥanna b. Ru'ba is clearly an Arabic name. If not the bishop, he could have been an Arab client of the Byzantines similar to Farwa b. 'Amr al-Judhāmī in Ma'ān.

'Aqaba was a bishopric, so Christians and bishops are well attested in historical sources in the Byzantine period up to the seventh century,⁶³ but rarely beyond.

The last reference to a bishop, unnamed, comes in 17 AH/638 AD when the caliph 'Umar (r. 634–644) passed through 'Aqaba on his way to Syria:

He gave the bishop a white cotton shirt of his, which had worn away on his seat due to the length of the trip, and said, 'Have this washed and patched.' The bishop left with the shirt and had it patched and had another one like it sewn for him and brought it back to 'Umar. When 'Umar asked what it was, the bishop replied, 'This is your shirt that I washed and patched and this is a garment for you from me.' 'Umar looked at it and wiped it. He put on his own shirt and returned the other one and said, 'Of the two this one absorbs sweat better.'⁶⁴

Muslims were present in 'Aqaba from the time of the conquest onwards and are extensively documented.⁶⁵ In the mid-seventh century the new Muslim rulers established a new settlement here.⁶⁶

The surrender of Udhruh and Jarba

At the same time that Yuḥanna b. Ru'ba arranged terms of surrender of 'Aqaba to the Prophet Muḥammad in Tabūk, people from Udhruh and Jarba (Fig. 6),⁶⁷ also surrendered to the Prophet Muḥammad when he was in Tabūk and agreed to pay the *jizya* poll-tax.

63 L. Di Segni/Y. Tsafirir/J. Green, *The Onomasticon of Iudaea, Palaestina and Arabia in the Greek and Latin Sources, Volume II, Part 1 Aalac Mons – Arabia, Chapter 4*, Jerusalem 2017, 212–252.

64 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (as footnote 4), vol. 1, 2522–2523, trans. G. Junyboll, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Volume 13: The Conquest of Iraq, Southwestern Persia, and Egypt*, Albany 1989, 102.

65 S. Daradkah, *Lamaḥāt min Ta'rikh Aylat al-'Aqaba*, *Dirāsāt Tārīkhīya* 15–16 (1984), 67–110; Y. Ghawanma, *Ayla (al-'Aqaba) wa-al-Baḥr al-Aḥmar*, Irbid 1984; P. Cobb, Scholars and Society at Early Islamic Ayla, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 38 no. 4 (1995), 417–428.

66 D. Whitcomb, Evidence of the Umayyad Period from the Aqaba Excavations, in: M. A. Adnan Bakhit/R. Schick (eds), *Bilad al-Sham During the Umayyad Period*, vol. 2, Amman 1989, 164–184; D. Whitcomb, The Miṣr of Ayla: Settlement at al-'Aqaba in the Early Islamic Period, in: G.R.D. King/A. Cameron (eds), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East II Land Use and Settlement Patterns*, Princeton 1994, 155–170, among other articles; K. Damgaard, Between Castrum and Medina: A Preliminary Note on Spatial Organisation and Urban Development in Medieval Aqaba, in: U. Vermeulen/K. D'Hulster/J. Van Steenbergen (eds), *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras VII*, Leuven 2013, 39–65.

67 Al-Rawāḍīya, *Mudawwanā* (as footnote 41), vol. 1, 72–76, 328, 342–344.



Fig. 6: The Archaeological Site of Jarba (Photo by Robert Schick).

The inhabitants of Udhruh were said to be Jews like at Jarba, to the north of Udhruh, and at Maqna, on the Red Sea coast of Saudi Arabia.⁶⁸

In another version of the event, both the people of Jarba and the people of Udhruh approached Prophet Muḥammad, who then issued a written document for them, which they retained in their possession for centuries.⁶⁹ In his *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, tenth century geographer al-Muqaddasī mentioned that they were keeping here the mantle of the Prophet Muḥammad and the treaty from him written on parchment.⁷⁰

Udhruh, ancient Augustopolis, to the east of Petra was the site of a Roman legionary fortress and civilian settlement. The Ghassanid/Jafnid phylarchs may have taken

⁶⁸ Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt* (as footnote 16), vol. 1.2, 37; al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb Futūḥ al-Buldān*, trans. P. K. Hitti/F. Clark, *The Origins of the Islamic State*, New York 1916, 92, 105; Shihāb al-Dīn Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld, Leipzig 1866–1873, vol. 1, 174–175, vol. 2, 36, 46; Shihāb al-Dīn Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, Beirut 1979, vol. 1, 129–130; Abū 'Ubayd 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Bakrī, *Muʿjam mā Istaʿjam min Asmā' al-Buldān wa-al-Mawāḍi'*, ed. M. al-Saqā, Cairo 1945–1951, 130–131, 374–375; Ibn 'Asākir *Ta'rīkh Madīnat Dimashq* (as footnote 4), vol. 2, 32; Le Strange, *Palestine under the Moslems* (as footnote 41), 508–509.

⁶⁹ Ibn 'Asākir *Ta'rīkh Madīnat Dimashq* (as footnote 4), 2:41.

⁷⁰ Al-Muqaddasī, *The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions* (as footnote 41), 149.

over the former fortress after the Emperor Justinian decommissioned the *limitanei* in the forts along the frontier.⁷¹ The fortunes of Udhruh under the Sasanians are untested, but the site continued to be occupied.

Excavations at Udhruh by Alistair Killick in the 1980s (1983) and by archaeologists from Al-Hussein Bin Talal University (Driessen and Abudanh 2015) in recent years have revealed little about the situation in the early seventh century.

Jarba is an unexcavated village site 4.5 km north of Udhruh, with wall lines visible on the surface spread out some 250 m north-south by 60 m east-west along the crest of a hill, forming buildings with a regularity to their layout. Abudanh noted pottery from multiple periods including Late Byzantine/Early Islamic.⁷² But prior to any excavation, there are no visible archaeological remains that would indicate that the inhabitants were Jews.

Jaussen told a story about Udhruh and nearby Jarba at the time of the Muslim Conquests:

The Prophet and his forty Companions were besieging Odhroḥ. But the place was well defended; it withstood the first attack victoriously. The Prophet (pbuh) withdrew to Jarbā in a cave where a spring was flowing. His companions soon began to murmur. Then the Prophet said, “*Jarrabnā Jarbā*, let us now see if we can take Odhroḥ.” And so we set off. The place was as well guarded as the first days. As we approached the walls, we saw a canal that was used for the flow of water from the interior of the city. Suddenly, a dog appeared at the opening of the canal and walked slowly towards the square. Bilāl, one of the Companions, followed this improvised guide, and reached the center of the city. The dog disappeared, while Bilāl boldly climbed the wall and called everyone to prayer. At the sound of this unusual voice all the frightened inhabitants killed each other. Now, adds the narrator, the dog that brought Belāl into the city was a jinn. Others, however, claim that it was a ghoul.⁷³

The surrender of Rabba

The main phase of the invasion of southern Jordan started in early 634. The main battles, e.g. the Battles of Ajnadayn and Yarmūk, took place elsewhere and the Arab historians record little about southern Jordan. The one event that they do record is the surrender of Rabba to the Muslim invaders early on.

Rabba, ancient Areopolis, was the most important city in the Karak plateau in the Byzantine and Early Islamic periods and is well documented.⁷⁴

71 I. Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century. Volume II, Part 1: Toponymy, Monuments, Historical Geography, and Frontier Studies*, Washington, D.C., 2002, 326–327.

72 F. Abudanh, *Settlement Patterns and Military Organisation in the Region of Udhruh (southern Jordan) in the Roman and Byzantine Periods*, Newcastle 2006, 412–413, no. 029.

73 Jaussen, *Coutumes des Arabes* (as footnote 20), 321, my translation.

74 L. Di Segni/Y. Tsafirir/J. Green, *The Onomasticon of Iudaea, Palaestina and Arabia in the Greek and Latin Sources, Volume II, Part 2 Arabia, Chapter 5 – Azzeira*, Jerusalem 2017, 705, 916.

Sebeos reports a battle here, in which the brother of the Emperor Heraclius was killed, but Sebeos apparently confused Rabba with Ajnadayn in southern Palestine, where a battle took place.⁷⁵

Rabba is mentioned by the Arab geographers under the names of al-Rabbah and Ma'āb.⁷⁶ Al-Bakri tells of giants and idol worshippers in Ma'āb, from where an idol of the god Hubal was brought to Mecca and worshiped.⁷⁷

Rabba is reported to be the first major city to fall to the Muslim invaders, either before or after the Muslim capture of Bostra, in southern Syria. As al-Ṭabarī recorded it:

The first peace agreement that happened in Syria was the peace agreement of Ma'āb, which is a tribal meeting place, not a city. Abū 'Ubayda passed by them on his way to Syria. It is a village of al-Balqā'. They fought him but then sought peace, and he made a peace agreement with them.⁷⁸

Al-Azdī also records the surrender,⁷⁹ while al-Balādhurī reports: "Ma'āb surrendered on terms similar to those made by Bostra, although according to others the conquest of Ma'āb was effected before that of Bostra."⁸⁰ Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī also recorded the two versions of which city surrendered first.⁸¹

Rabba was a flourishing city both before and after the Muslim Conquest, so what led to al-Ṭabarī's characterization of it as a tribal meeting place, not a city is obscure. Only poorly published information is available about the archaeological remains at this major urban site, although one Greek inscription dated to 687 indicates that Rabba had replaced Petra as the seat of the metropolitan bishop by then.⁸²

Petra

Other than the surrender of Rabba, the Arab historians say little about southern Jordan. It is remarkable that Petra, the capital of the Byzantine Province of Third Pales-

⁷⁵ R. W. Thomson/J. Howard-Johnston (eds), *The Armenian History attributed to Sebeos*, Liverpool 1999, 96–97, and the editors' commentary, 240–241.

⁷⁶ Al-Rawāḍīya, *Mudawwana* (as footnote 41), vol. 1, 526–527 (al-Rabbah); vol. 2, 333–240 (Ma'āb).

⁷⁷ Al-Bakrī, *Mu'jam* (as footnote 67), vol. 1, 168.

⁷⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (as footnote 4), vol. 1, 2108.

⁷⁹ Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh Al-Azdī, *Futūḥ al-Shām*, ed. 'A. 'Āmir, Cairo 1970, 29.

⁸⁰ Al-Balādhurī, *The Origins* (as footnote 67), 173.

⁸¹ Al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam* (as footnote 67), vol. 5, 31.

⁸² F. Zayadine, Deux inscriptions grecques de Rabbat Moab (Areopolis), *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 16 (1971), 71–76.

tine is not mentioned. Seemingly after a major earthquake soon after 593–594, the last date recorded in the Petra Papyri,⁸³ Petra was no longer a significant urban center, and so its capture by the Muslims was not important enough to be recorded. Nor were there any other events in southern Jordan connected with the Conquest that the Arab historians considered worth mentioning.

83 A. Arjava/J. Frösén/J. Kaimio, *The Petra Papyri V*, Amman 2018, 56–58.

Marcus Phillips

Coinage in Syria before and after the Arab conquest. The results and significance of new research

This article summarises recent progress in the study of the coinage of seventh century Syria concentrating on the period before and after the Arab conquest. Developments were determined by continuing Byzantine interest in the area and the lack of any visible initiative on the part of the new occupiers. There is little evidence of any synthesis between the Roman coinage system based on gold and the Persian based on silver. For at least thirty years the region remained essentially part of the Byzantine currency system supplied with new coins in both gold and copper. It is argued that this needs to be investigated in the context of current debates about the role of coinage in the ancient world and long term historical developments.

Introduction

In the seventh century major changes occurred in the Near East which were vividly reflected in the coinage. Some sixty years after the conquest of Syria the new Arab rulers introduced a coinage in three metals: gold, silver and copper, which was very different from what had existed before. Not only were images of all kinds dispensed with, but the coins were struck in the name of God, not a secular ruler. The caliph's name did not appear until 763, which is thirteen years after the foundation of the 'Abbasid dynasty.¹

This study concentrates on the decades before and after the Arab conquest. The ensuing period leading up to the reforms of the Umayyad caliph 'Abd al-Malik (r. 685–705) are discussed only in so far as they throw light on earlier developments. I have tried to trace the monetary developments in the context of long term historical changes which the Arab conquest either accelerated or diverted.

There are different views about the function of coins in ancient society. The coin evidence in the present case throws a challenging light on this debate, hence the need for a brief introductory discussion. I have avoided the term 'monetisation' which is presently in vogue with historians who equate it with the use of coin. Money can and does exist independently of coinage systems. Coins are also more than money. They

¹ For a recent examination of the significance of this departure see M. Bates, Who was named on 'Abbasid coins?', in: M. Faghfoury (ed.), *Iranian numismatic studies. A volume in honor of Stephen Album*, Lancaster, PA 2017, 89–99.

convey cultural and political information quite apart from their role as fiscal and commercial instruments.

The numismatics of seventh century Syria: Historians' questions and theoretical issues

Until about thirty years ago the coinage of Syria in the aftermath of the Arab conquest was a neglected subject.² More recently the coins have been regarded as worthy of study in their own right rather than as the, relatively unimportant, epilogue to classical coins or the, equally marginal, prologue to Islamic ones. Consequently, in the last few years the rate at which new data has become available has been so great and complex that it is difficult to keep up with it.³ Our knowledge may have increased dramatically over the last thirty years but how all the new information is to be interpreted has raised more questions than it answers. Before these questions can be addressed the theoretical issues which they raise need to be briefly sketched.

Numismatists interested in the transitional coinages, Arab-Byzantine and Arab Sasanian, have been flattered by the interest shown in the work by historians. Ever since the 1990s there has been a gradual appreciation of the unreliability of the written sources particularly with regard to Syria. The debate has ebbed and flowed, unfortunately complicated by modern ideological preoccupations, but nobody now would take the literary sources at face value as was done in the past. Coins are contemporary documents. Might they convey information that the written sources do not?

Continuity or change?

The divergent views taken by two eminent authors illustrate the gulf in opinion about the effect of the Arab conquest. Did it result in an abrupt and decisive economic transformation or was the process essentially gradual? C. Wickham's *Framing of the Middle Ages* argues in favour of continuity. Wickham's approach is remarkable in that he combines archaeological and literary evidence. He has a chapter on 'Systems of Exchange' which he describes as 'in many ways the core of the book'. Near the beginning of his discussion he has a footnote explaining that he has not made much use of coin

² The history of the study of 'Arab-Byzantine' coins is sketched by T. Goodwin, Arab-Byzantine coinage, in: S. Album/T. Goodwin, *Sylloge of Islamic coins in the Ashmolean 1. The pre-reform coinage of the early Islamic period*, Oxford 2002, 74–112 at 75–77.

³ Much of this has appeared in the publications of the Seventh Century Syria Numismatic Round Table. For details see the Appendix.

evidence. Among his reasons are that copper coins are predominantly what turn up on archaeological sites. They were not minted in the post-Roman west and curiously, even when they were being struck in the east, they can show a striking absence from archaeological sites even in times of apparent prosperity. The examples he singles out are fifth century Palestine and eighth century Iraq.⁴

Consequently when he comes to discuss Syria and Palestine the manufacture, and distribution of ceramics dominates the archaeological discussion. The conclusion is one of relative tranquillity and continuity: the ‘material invisibility’ of the Arab conquest. The wars and invasion of the seventh century made relatively little impact. The aristocracy in the shape of wealthy urban elites survived into the eighth century. There was a tendency towards fragmentation affecting the fiscal system as well as the economy, but change was evolutionary rather than traumatic.

This interpretation has been attacked by J. Banaji precisely on the grounds that it ignores ‘monetisation’.⁵ He argues that the existing aristocracies (both Greek and Persian) were destroyed or dispersed and replaced by an acquisitive and entrepreneurial Arab aristocracy. The resulting society was far more ‘monetised’ in the sense that the transition from payment of tax in kind to payment in cash, already visible in late antiquity, was completed. In this sense the Arabs can be said to have enhanced a trend that was already prevalent. But where did the money (and by ‘money’ he means coins) come from? It came by reversing a process whereby precious metal was being hoarded by the church in the case of Byzantium and the state in the case of Persia. Furthermore Banaji implies, without being very specific, that this new aristocracy (with the ultra-rich caliphs at its head) combined the wealth of the two empires almost immediately. On the basis of the much cited (but not necessarily reliable) statement in al-Balādhurī’s (d. 892) *Futūḥ al-Buldān* that the Quraysh were used to using Byzantine gold and Sasanian silver by weight long before Muslim times he implies that they used both as money after the conquest.⁶ He cites various chroniclers who record transactions involving ‘Uthmān (r. 644–56) and Mu‘āwiya (r. 661–680) in breathtaking sums in both silver and gold.⁷ In particular he singles out the vast quantities of gold said to have been hoarded by the Persians which supposedly found its

4 C. Wickham, *Framing the early middle ages*, Oxford 2005, 702, n. 16. I do not understand the reference to ninth century Rome where there were no copper coins.

5 J. Banaji, Precious metal coinage and monetary expansion in late antiquity, in: F. di Romanis/S. Sorda (eds), *Dal denarius al dinar, Istituto italiano di numismatica, Studi e materiali* 12 (2006), 265–303; J. Banaji, Late antique legacies and Muslim economic expansion, in: J. Haldon (ed.), *Money, power and politics in early Islamic Syria*, Farnham 2010, 165–179. Both republished in J. Banaji, *Exploring the economy of late antiquity, selected essays*, Cambridge 2016, nos 9 and 6 respectively. Page references in the present article are to those in the reprint.

6 H. Kennedy (trans.), *History of the Arab invasions: The conquest of the lands. A new translation of al-Balādhurī’s Futūḥ al-Buldān*, London 2022, 454.

7 Banaji, Late antique legacies (as footnote 5), 212–214.

way to the west since, in terms of coinage, silver continued to predominate in the east.

This contrasts with the picture presented by A. Walmsley who finds evidence of ‘demonetisation’ at a number of sites in Jordan and Palestine in the eighth and ninth centuries. Active they may have been in terms of pottery and other signs of human activity but ‘disconnected from an active monetary economy’.⁸

The contradiction partly reflects the fact that the written sources only mention gold and silver, the archaeologists mostly find just copper. The Arabic sources who mention these huge sums are not necessarily very reliable. Banaji does not analyse the numismatic evidence. His claim that there was a sudden and dramatic increase in the volume of precious metal which was turned into coins relies heavily on an article by M. Lombard written in 1947.⁹ This is very dated and on the specific point regarding the de-thesaurisation of Byzantine church property, Lombard only sees this as taking place after the monetary reforms of ‘Abd al-Malik. I have recently argued that Lombard’s view was broadly correct.¹⁰

Modernists vs primitivists

Coinciding with the growing awareness of the questionable reliability of the Arabic sources, numismatists themselves have been increasingly concerned with other relevant theoretical issues. The first is the debate between the ‘modernists’ and the ‘primitivists’: why did ancient states issue coins and what was their function?¹¹ For a long time the ‘primitivist’ view that the late Roman/Byzantine state issued coins purely for fiscal and, possibly, for propagandist reasons was generally accepted. It was expressed forcefully by M. Hendy in his massive 1985 work on Byzantine coinage.¹² On the face of it such a view hardly corresponds with the proto-capitalist view of the early caliphate and is strongly criticised by Banaji.¹³ On the other hand there is scope

8 A. Walmsley, Coinage and the economy of Syria-Palestine in the seventh and eighth centuries CE, in: J. Haldon (ed.), *Money, power and politics* (as footnote 5), 21–44, at 32.

9 M. Lombard, Les bases monétaires d’une suprématie économique: l’or musulman du vii^e au xii^e siècle, *Annales: économies, sociétés, civilisations* 2 (1947), 143–160. The chapter in the same author’s *L’Islam dans sa première grandeur*, Paris 1971, which Banaji also cites, merely repeats the earlier article.

10 M. Phillips, The significance of the monetary reforms of ‘Abd al-Malik, in: T. Goodwin (ed.), *Coinage and History* 7 (see appendix).

11 Cf. the useful and concise summary in C. Morrisson, Introduction, in: C. Morrisson (ed.), *Trade and markets in Byzantium*, Washington, DC 2012, 2–4.

12 M. Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine monetary economy c.300–1450*, Cambridge 1985.

13 J. Banaji, Mass production, monetary economy and the commercial vitality of the Mediterranean, exploring the economy. Late antique legacies (as footnote 5), 1–34, at 7–13. Banaji prefers ‘minimalist’ to describe Hendy’s views.

for reconciling the two approaches. It is now argued that gold was used to pay state officials, both military and civilian. They exchanged the gold for copper for day to day spending via official money changers. Large landowners sold their produce to the state in order to obtain the gold necessary to pay tax. Smaller producers exchanged the copper via the same changers also to obtain gold to pay tax. Gold coins were therefore bound in a cycle from which only a small amount escaped.¹⁴ This model begs the question, why bother to melt and re-strike the gold? Banaji suggests that during the fifth and sixth centuries there was less re-striking, older coins tended to remain in circulation and, consequently, available coin stocks gradually increased.¹⁵ This has considerable bearing on the circulation of gold after the conquest which is discussed below. Assuming such a system, or something resembling it, really existed and the Arabs managed to break it and release the coins into circulation it would explain the sudden availability of bullion better than looted churches.

The interpretation of coin finds

Numismatists have also begun to think more deeply about the interpretation of coin hoards. There has been an increasing realisation that the motives and circumstances that lie behind the deposition of (and, of course, the failure to recover) coin hoards are more complicated than used to be assumed.¹⁶ The natural inclination to associate a hoard with a recorded historical event, usually disastrous, also needs to be critically examined. The problem of how to interpret the seventh century hoard evidence is illustrated below.

Coins as propaganda

As far as Islamic coins are concerned Michael Bates dismisses this in his usual trenchant style:

¹⁴ R. Reece, Coins and the late Roman economy, in: L. Lavan/W. Bowden (eds), *Theory and practice in late antique archaeology*, Leiden 2003, 139–170. This is an extreme version of the argument. The sheer numbers of sixth and seventh century Byzantine gold coins now extant prove that quantities of gold coins were used and hoarded. Unfortunately so few hoards of these coins are properly recorded.

¹⁵ Banaji, Monetary expansion (as footnote 5), 121.

¹⁶ See most recently F. de Callataÿ, Coin deposits and civil wars in a long term perspective (c. 400 BC–1950 AD), *Numismatic Chronicle* 177 (2017), 313–338. The discussion in A. Gândilă, Reconciling the ‘step sisters’: early Byzantine numismatics, history and archaeology, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 111(1) (2018), 101–134, esp. 114–116, is more closely related to the present topic.

There is no indication in any of the many medieval Arabic and Persian political histories and texts on statecraft and administration that Muslim rulers thought of using coins to address a mass audience to win popular loyalty or to communicate to their subjects.¹⁷

By contrast late Roman coins abound in political messages though there is some scepticism as to their importance or effect. H. Jones thought they had no more significance than modern postage stamp designs which are decided by minor officials. Likewise the target audience had little idea of the symbolism and iconography involved. In support of this he cites a passage in John of Ephesus (d. 586) that when Justin II (r. 565–578) placed the figure of Constantinople on the reverse of his gold solidi ‘many people thought it was Aphrodite’ (Fig. 1a). His successor Tiberius II (r. 578–582) proved his Christianity by replacing the figure with a cross on steps (Fig. 1b).¹⁸ This is echoed by P. Brown, ‘The average man had lost touch with the erudite literary symbolism that had encrusted the public life of the empire.’ But he goes on to draw a more fundamental comparison.

It was not just unfamiliar images but a gradual change in consciousness: people were ceasing to think of themselves as citizens of the state, instead they were members of a religious community. Thus, even though Heraclius (r. 610–641) had decisively defeated the Persians:

Outside Constantinople and Asia Minor, (he) was unable to harness the new devotion to the Byzantine state. Tired and bankrupt he returned to provinces that had not known a Christian emperor for up to twenty years. For the first time Christian popular devotion was slipping out of the tentacles of the east Roman state.

The arrival of the Arabs merely cut the last threads that had bound the provincials of the Near East to the Roman empire. In the Arab empire nobody was a ‘citizen’ in the classical sense. This was the final victory of the idea of the religious community over the classical idea of the state.¹⁹

Although Brown does not mention the reformed coins of ‘Abd al-Malik they vividly symbolise this changed mentality. Far from being a sudden break with the past, the new coins were merely the culmination of a long term trend.

If the old classical symbolism had lost its resonance this did not mean that the standards of coins and the images they contained had ceased to matter. Quite early in Christian writings two related ideas can be found which emphasised first, the importance of the purity of the metal as a symbol of public morality and, secondly, the vital

¹⁷ Bates, Who was named on ‘Abbasid coins? (as footnote 1), 89.

¹⁸ A. H. M. Jones, Numismatics and history, in: R. Carson/H. Sutherland (eds), *Essays in Roman coinage presented to Harold Mattingly*, Oxford 1956, 15–16. The classic, sceptical, treatment is still M. H. Crawford, Roman imperial coin types and the formation of public opinion, in: C. N. L. Brooke/B. H. I. H. Stewart/G. Pollard/T. R. Volk (eds), *Studies in numismatic method presented to Philip Grierson*, Cambridge 1983, 47–64, whose conclusions are essentially those of Jones.

¹⁹ Cf. P. Brown, *The world of late antiquity*, London 1971, 181, 184, 187.



Figs. 1a–b: Solidi of Justin II (a) and Tiberius II (b) with Constantinople (as ‘Aphrodite’) and a cross on steps on the reverse respectively (Photo: American Numismatic Society 1999.34.38 and 1977.158.1039).



Fig. 2: Heraclius’ silver hexagram with the legend ‘God helps the Romans’ (Photo: American Numismatic Society 1955.59.5).

role of the imperial portrait. To the Roman statesman and scholar Cassiodorus (d. ca. 585) the circulation of the emperor’s portrait among his subjects was the main reason coinage existed!²⁰ Portraits on Byzantine coins had become stylised but Heraclius was

²⁰ M. Hendy, The administration of mints and treasuries, 4th to 7th centuries, with an Appendix on the production of silver plate, in: M. Hendy, *The economy, fiscal administration and coinage of Byzantium*, Northampton 1989, no. VI, 2.

very careful with the presentation of himself and his family on his coins. He also depicted himself as a conquering Roman emperor both on his ceremonial silver pieces and on the copper coins struck after his triumph over the Persians, some of which even showed him with a sword. The legend 'God helps the Romans' on the new silver hexagrams emphasised the crusading aspect of the emperor's campaigns as well as the church's contribution (Fig. 2). The elaborate celebrations surrounding the return of the True Cross and other relics both in Constantinople and Jerusalem in 630 which saw Heraclius celebrated, not merely as the new Constantine but also the new David, reveal a well oiled propaganda machine. Coinage was only a part of this.²¹ It hardly corresponds with Brown's description 'tired and bankrupt' but the disasters which were soon to follow show this description has a good deal of accuracy.

Coinage and currency in post-conquest Syria

From the point of view of a historian trying to comprehend the work of the numismatists, the failure of the latter even to agree on a precise terminology is a drawback. In addition to 'phases 1, 2 and 3', we have terms such as 'pseudo-Byzantine', 'Byzantine Proxy 1 and 2' and 'Umayyad Imperial image'.²² This simply reflects the apparently anarchic nature of much of the coinage. The task of a numismatist is to identify the date, place and issuing authority of a coin. In the case of the copper coins which were struck in Syria between the Arab conquest and the reforms of 'Abd al-Malik our answers to the first and last of these are still mostly guesswork. Even the so-called 'Standing Caliph' issue, which usually bears a mint name and the caliph's name and/or title, is anonymous at some mints where the legend *Muḥammad rasūl allāh* has been taken to mean that the Prophet Muḥammad rather than the caliph is depicted.²³ For the purposes of the present discussion I propose simply to refer to three basic categories. The first 'pseudo-Byzantine' means copies of contemporary Byzantine coins of widely varying quality which do not give any information about their mint. There are rare gold coins belonging to this category. The second, 'Arab-Byzantine', are coins which have some sort of meaningful inscription, usually a mint name in Arabic and Greek (Fig. 3a). The rare '*shahāda solidi*' can be included here. Finally there is the aforementioned 'Standing Caliph' issue which also exists in gold and silver (Fig. 3b). The very rare 'Standing Caliph' gold should probably be grouped together with the

21 Y. Stoyanov, Apocalypticizing warfare: from political theology to imperial eschatology in seventh to eighth century Byzantium, in: K.B. Bardakjian/La Porta (eds), *The Armenian apocalyptic tradition. A comparative perspective. Essays presented in honor of Professor Robert W. Thomson*, Leiden/Boston 2014, 379–437, esp. 390–394.

22 W. Schulze/A. Oddy, Terminology for the transitional coinage struck in 7th century Syria after the Arab conquest, in: T. Goodwin (ed.), *Arab-Byzantine coins and history* [3] (see Appendix) 187–200.

23 Most recent discussion in T. Goodwin, *The standing caliph coinage*, London 2018, 29–30.

silver issues in Sasanian style from Damascus/Dimashq and Emesa/Himş as part of the ‘experiments’, which preceded the aniconic reform coinage.



Figs. 3a–b: Anonymous ‘Arab Byzantine’ copper from Syria with the mint name of Damascus in Greek (a) and a ‘Standing Caliph’ issue from Ilya/Jerusalem (b) (Photo: L.-J. Lübke, Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen, 18203506; American Numismatic Society, 1971.316.288).

These categories correspond to Phases 1, 2 and 3, but it must be remembered that the latter are descriptive tools and do not indicate a chronological progression from ‘Byzantine’ to ‘Arab’ since the ‘phases’, at least in the case of the copper, overlapped considerably. Furthermore, as far as the first two categories are concerned there is nothing on the coins to indicate who issued them.²⁴

This means that the historians’ basic questions relating to chronology and authorisation still cannot be answered precisely. On the other hand, recent progress has highlighted a number of areas where the contribution of numismatics to the ongoing debate about the nature of the changes that took place in Syria as a result of the Arab conquest is more substantial. These can be summarised as follows: A mint (or possibly mints) striking copper in the name of Byzantine emperors existed during the Persian

²⁴ For a recent and more comprehensive summary see I. and W. Schulze, Umayyad numismatics in Bilād al-Shām with particular reference to Jund al-Urdunn, in: A. Lichtenberger/R. Raja (eds), *Transitions, transformations and continuities. The Byzantine and Arab period in Jerash reconsidered* (Jerash Papers 4), Turnhout 2019, 239–364.

occupation. A small group of gold coins has recently been attributed to this mint which was apparently tolerated by the Persians.

The Heraclian restoration was brief, but it certainly saw the introduction of large quantities of new Byzantine gold and copper coins. This continued after the Arab conquest, gold coins from the years 636 to 640 (i.e. after the Battle of Yarmūk) being particularly common.

This import of official Byzantine coins continued under Constans II (r. 641–668), one type in particular being specifically exported to Cyprus and Syria. This import lasted at least until 660, or later in the case of the copper, and to 680 in the case of the gold.

The Arab conquest did occasion the de-thesaurisation of silver coins from the Sasanian state treasuries. This process may have begun in the closing phase of the Byzantine-Persian war. There is no evidence of Sasanian or Arab-Sasanian silver coins playing any part in the currency of Syria in the seventh century.

The ‘pseudo-Byzantine’ coinage (Phase 1) was not totally unorganised but seems to show a degree of metrological coherence linked to the typology.

By contrast the Arab-Byzantine and Standing Caliph coins (Phases 2 and 3) have turned out to contain large numbers of irregular issues.

Some of the above is still the subject of debate over points of detail and aspects of it may be primarily of numismatic interest. Obviously more data will make the situation clearer. Nonetheless, the broad outlines are clear and what remains to be discussed is what light they throw on the various topics already raised: in particular the degree of continuity versus sudden change and the role of coinage in the classical state.

The coinage system and the Persian occupation

In Syria the Arab conquest was preceded by a twenty-year occupation by the Persians and a Byzantine re-occupation which lasted barely six years. What can the numismatic evidence tell us about the effect of the Persian occupation and how successful was the Emperor Heraclius in restoring Byzantine rule?

It would be wrong to see the Arab conquest as disrupting an established system. Quite apart from the Persian invasion, the coinage of Syria was a system in transition. It is customary to define Byzantine coinage as starting with the reforms of Anastasius (r. 491–518) but these continued a much older system established by Diocletian (r. 284–305) and modified by Constantine the Great (r. 307–337). It was based on gold and was extremely centralised. With a few occasional exceptions the *moneta publica* at Constantinople became the sole producer of gold and silver. Copper was issued by mints located in the diocesan capitals. Antioch was the mint for the diocese of Oriens which meant in practice it was the sole mint in Syria.

The next significant change, and a sign that the system was under strain, was the creation of a new prefecture the *Quaestura Exercitus* in 536–537. It was based in Cyprus, but its function was to supply the hard pressed Danubian provinces of Moesia II and Scythia with coins from the stable southern provinces. The existence of this prefecture had been known for a long time, but it was not until significant data became available, especially from the Balkans, that it became clear how important it was. By the time of Maurice (r. 582–602), particularly in the second half of his reign, folles from the mint of Antioch pre-dominate in finds from the Balkans to Palestine. It remained productive under Phocas despite the deteriorating political situation. It was captured by the Persians in 610 and never reopened.

In 629–30 at the successful conclusion of the war with Persia the government of Heraclius finally dismantled the old system. With the exception of Alexandria and Constantinople the remaining eastern mints were shut.

There seems now to be a consensus that, in contrast to Anatolia where the impact of the Persians was purely destructive, in Syria, Mesopotamia and Egypt it was relatively benign. Whatever his intentions may have been when he launched his first attacks on Byzantine territory, Khusrau II (second reign 591–628) soon decided to integrate these eastern lands permanently into the Sasanian empire. To achieve this he needed the active co-operation of the local urban patriciate and he had to avoid antagonising the population at large. While Byzantine local government administrators were removed, there is no sign of changes to provincial boundaries or jurisdictions.²⁵

On the other hand Khusrau II needed to exploit the occupied territories to sustain the Sasanian war effort. There is evidence of direct confiscations, for example the cathedral at Edessa was fined a large amount in silver for conspiring against the governor, but the crucial element was the maintenance of the existing system of fiscal extraction. Here, the only documentary evidence is from a small collection of Egyptian papyri. These show that the existing Byzantine system continued to be exploited and decreases in the monetary amounts raised were offset by the curtailment in grain shipments to Constantinople.

The tax was collected in gold solidi but the Persian army was normally paid in silver. There is very little sign of Sasanian drachms in Syria or Egypt and there is no obvious reason why the soldiers could not have been paid in gold (with copper for minor transactions) which was acceptable in the occupied regions. Transporting large amounts of precious metal backwards and forwards would have been costly and hazardous.

The Persians struck copper coinage in Egypt but not in Syria. One of the surprises thrown up by recent numismatic research is the existence of a mint, probably situated

²⁵ This is largely based on J. Howard-Johnston, *The Sasanian empire at its apogee*, in: Oddy/Schulze/Schulze (eds), *Coinage and History* 4 (see Appendix) 1–16. See now J. Howard-Johnston, *The last great war of antiquity*, Oxford 2021, 153–166.

near Emesa/Hims, coining in the name of Heraclius and earlier emperors. The products of this mint are not just barbarous imitations but seem to mirror production at Constantinople as far as dates and typology are concerned.²⁶ Was this simply tolerated by the Persians or was it, as Howard-Johnston suggests, a 'gesture of defiance by dissident elements issued in the hope of fomenting sedition at times of heightened anxiety'? One can perhaps understand the occupying authorities turning a blind eye to a limited issue of copper coins but recently a small gold issue has been attributed to the period of the Persian occupation.²⁷ Even if this is correct, and it does not seem so far to have provoked any discussion, it is difficult to evaluate its importance. The gold coins, which are struck in the name of Heraclius' predecessors, seem to be from very early times of the Persian occupation. There is no sign of them being issued over an extended period. Irrespective of their precise status, the scale of the issue of these coins was too small to make any contribution to the Syrian economy. They do, however, demonstrate the importance of coins as a political weapon rather than an economic one.

What is probably more significant in terms of the quantity of surviving examples is the issue of large numbers of folles with the Cyprus mint mark in Heraclius' regnal years 17–19 (October 626 – October 629). These are virtually absent in finds from the island itself, but they are found in small quantities on the adjacent Syrian mainland.²⁸ Year 17 is by far the commonest date. Imitations copying this date, of varying quality, are far commoner than the originals and the regnal date formula is echoed in the reverse design of the early Arab-Byzantine issues of Damascus (Fig. 3a).²⁹ I have argued that the opening of this Cypriot mint and the distribution of its coins indicates a renewed optimism about the outcome to the Persian war on the part of the Byzantines. These Cypriot coins were all struck before the formal re-occupation of Syria in the spring of 630 and the implication is that they reached the mainland before this. There are no records of any Byzantine military incursions and, since the coins apparently

26 H. Pottier, *Le monnayage de la Syrie sous l'occupation perse (610–630)*, *Cahiers Ernest Babelon* 9 (2004); H. Pottier, *Le monnayage de la Syrie sous l'occupation perse: complément*, *Revue Numismatique* 166 (2010), 447–476; H. Pottier, 7th century 'barbarous' folles: a secondary mint in the eastern part of the Byzantine empire under Persian rule, in: Oddy/Schulze/Schulze (eds), *Coinage and History* 4 (see Appendix), 17–26.

27 H. Pottier, Syrian gold coins under Persian rule - re-attribution of fractional gold imitations up to now attributed by Hahn to the time of the revolt of the Heraclii, in: T. Goodwin (ed.), *Coinage and History* 5 (see Appendix), 8–10.

28 M. Phillips, The import of Byzantine coins to Syria revisited, in: T. Goodwin (ed.), *Arab-Byzantine Coins and History* [3] (see Appendix), 39–72, at 49. Although examples are known from further east they are, curiously, absent from Israel. G. Bijovsky, *Gold coin and small change: monetary circulation in fifth–seventh century Byzantine Palestine*, Trieste 2012, 382, n. 27.

29 H. Pottier/I. Schulze/W. Schulze, Pseudo-Byzantine coinage in Syria under Arab rule (638–c.670). Classification and dating, *Revue Belge de Numismatique* 154 (2008), 87–155. The Cypriot imitations are their class I la.

did not circulate to any extent in Cyprus, casual losses through trade are ruled out. How then did they get there? What was the motive behind their issue? These questions will be considered in the discussion of the export of Byzantine coins to Syria after the Arab conquest. For the present this phenomenon serves to underline the key role played by Cyprus in the supply of Byzantine coins to Syria.

The Byzantine restoration

The Byzantine restoration in Syria was brief and the question arises, to what extent did the Byzantines have the time and resources to restore the coinage and related fiscal system before the Arab conquest. Alternatively, was it merely a minor interlude between the two occupations? Walmsley, for example, sees the Byzantine re-occupation as irrelevant in that it failed to disrupt a trend that had already set in under the Sasanians:

The Sāsānid occupation of Bilād al Shām seemingly established many economic and social precedents that set the conditions for a relatively effortless and trouble free consolidation of Muslim political dominion over Bilād al Shām after the 630s in which the church played a leading role.³⁰

One of the precedents that Walmsley has in mind is the existence of the mint coining in the name of Heraclius and his predecessors which has just been discussed. The products of this mint, however, were too few in number and too localised in their circulation to provide much of a precedent. The role of the church will be discussed below.

I suggested some time ago that the hoard evidence, in so far as it was then available, suggested that the Byzantine re-occupation of Syria under Heraclius was more traumatic than the Arab conquest. I was concerned about a tendency to attribute the known hoards from this period to the Arab conquest regardless of their date. It seemed that, judging by their apparent dates, in so far as hoards reflect fear and uncertainty, there was more sign of this at the time of the Byzantine re-occupation than after the Arab conquest.³¹ The mass of material from Israel collated and published by G. Bijovsky presents a more complex picture. It is clear that the time interval is too short to say whether a hoard is deposited in 629 or, say, after 633. As already outlined, numismatists' ideas about hoards have also developed. The principal that they can always be collated with social and/or political upheaval is too simplistic and they cannot necessarily be dated by the latest coin they contain.³²

³⁰ Walmsley, *Coinage and the economy* (as footnote 8), 27.

³¹ M. Phillips, *Currency in seventh century Syria as a historical source*, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 28 (2004), 13–31, at 20–22.

³² Bijovsky, *Gold coin and small change* (as footnote 28), chapter 4.5.2.

I am less convinced by Bijovsky's arguments about the extent to which Heraclius was able to restore the Byzantine currency system. In 630 when the provincial mints were closed Heraclius introduced a new heavy follis which, together with fractions, was struck on a large scale. Not surprisingly these are plentiful in Syrian finds and would have been brought into the country at the time of the Byzantine re-occupation in 630. While it is true that the single finds do register a substantial number of the new heavy folles, the copper hoards do not. They show a relatively large number of old coins and few new ones. The problem is that in the aftermath of the Battle of Yarmūk, that is between 636–637 and 639–640, the Constantinople mint (by now the only operative one) issued hardly any copper coins. I have also argued that the falling off in coin use in subsequent centuries, highlighted by Walmsley, was a reflection of Heraclius' failure to re-establish Byzantine rule in southern Palestine.

The circulation of Byzantine gold coins in the immediate aftermath of the Battle of Yarmūk has been highlighted by the recent publication of a hoard from Jerusalem.³³ It consists of 53 solidi of the three figure type, all in fresh condition, 75% of which are dated after 638 and nearly 50% from the years 640–641. It cannot therefore be related to Byzantine military activity, at least in the vicinity of where the hoard was found. The account includes a die study which confirms previous estimates that gold coin production which had tended to decline after 630 increased during and after the Arab conquest.³⁴ A brief analysis of other gold hoards emphasises the relatively large proportion of coins of Heraclius even in hoards buried much later.

Bijovsky takes the presence of large numbers of Heraclius gold coins in post-conquest Syria as evidence that Heraclius had at least partially succeeded in restoring the Byzantine currency system. Her thesis, however, stops with the end of the reign of Heraclius and does not deal with subsequent developments. In an earlier, and fundamental, article she looks at subsequent gold hoards. She lists under the heading 'Muslim Conquest' a number of hoards, several of which contain much later coins. These

³³ B. Callegger, Un ripostiglio di solidi di Eraclio (632–641) da Gerusalemme, *Revue Numismatique* (2018), 331–353. The hoard was discovered at the end of the nineteenth century in the convent of St Stephen but is here published for the first time.

³⁴ A formula exists for calculating the number of original dies used to strike the coins from the number of identical dies in a given sample. W. Esty, How to estimate the original number of dies and coverage of a sample, *Numismatic Chronicle* 166 (2006), 359–364. There are two schools of thought as to whether it is then possible to estimate the size of the original issue by multiplying the estimated number of dies by the number of coins they might have struck. In my opinion this involves an arbitrary assumption of dubious validity. All that can be said is that more dies equal more coins, at least with an operation on the scale of the Constantinople mint. Cf. T. V. Buttrey, Calculating ancient coin production: facts and fantasies, *Numismatic Chronicle* 153 (1993), 335–351; T.V. Buttrey, Calculating ancient coin production II: why it cannot be done, *Numismatic Chronicle* 154 (1994), 341–352; F. De Callataÿ, Calculating ancient coin production: seeking a balance, *Numismatic Chronicle* 155 (1995), 289–311.

could have reached Syria much later than the conquest itself.³⁵ The striking point about the 'new' hoard is that it seems to confirm that the conquest made no difference to the coin supply. It was not interrupted and then restarted once relations had stabilised.

B. Callegher briefly discusses the continuing import of Byzantine gold suggesting it functioned as a 'reserve of value' or fiscal instrument until it was supplanted by a new system more diverse than that of the Byzantines. He also suggests that the proliferation of the late Heraclius three figure type was especially influential as the model for the first regular Islamic gold coins. He does not discuss how the Byzantine coins reached Syria.

After the Arab conquest

The debate over bullion supply and economic growth

Our knowledge of developments in Syria in the aftermath of the Arab conquest is limited by the lack of reliable accounts. Thanks to modern textual scholarship we now have a far better grasp of events than was the case twenty years ago. Essentially this is confined to the political narrative. Economic and social developments remain obscure. This lack of evidence has tacitly been taken to mean that no decisive changes occurred. Walmsley paints a picture of a gradual decline continuing from before the Persian invasion, Wickham is less pessimistic but does not see the conquest as marking any decisive change.

Long term change did, of course, occur. The prosperity and fiscal efficiency of the caliphate had long been recognised but the tendency had been to regard this as being inaugurated by the reforms of 'Abd al-Malik which created a reliable universally negotiable currency combining the currency systems of Persia and Byzantium. Even then it took a long time to become established. Banaji would prefer to see it starting almost immediately, fuelled by a dramatic increase in bullion supply resulting from de-thesaurisation. In the west this took the form of gold and silver stored in churches, in the east it came from the Sasanian treasury.

The picture revealed by the coin evidence appears on the face of it to support Banaji. As already outlined, the hoard evidence shows a massive increase in official Byzantine gold coins, after the Arab invasion, which ended around 680. Copper coins

³⁵ G. Bijovsky, A hoard of Byzantine solidi from Bet She'an in the Umayyad period, *Revue Numismatique* 158 (2002), 161–227. The table on page 183 (fig. 11) is a very useful presentation of the hoard data. The figures for the Rehov hoard need revision. See below, footnote 55. In November 2022 a hoard of 44 solidi datable to 635 was reported from excavations at Banias. This is certainly more likely to be connected with the Arab invasion, <<https://coinsweekly.com/?s=Banias>> (17 Nov. 2022).

also exist in quantity but the main flow of imports seems to have tailed off 15 to 20 years earlier. This was supplemented by local issues of uncertain status. These were mostly copper though rare issues in gold exist. At some stage probably around 670 the so-called Arab-Byzantine coins with mint names appear. If increased coin supply is evidence of economic growth and general prosperity then post-conquest Syria was increasingly wealthy. Contrary to Banaji's argument this was not achieved by the release of stored gold, but by newly minted gold from Constantinople.

Although it is not strictly relevant to Syria it is worth noting that recent research has confirmed that a good deal of silver was released from the Sasanian empire. There is clear hoard evidence of the stockpiling of vast numbers of silver drachms after 601–602. The quantities in the hoards are too great and the number of hoards too many to be the accumulations of private citizens.³⁶ S. Tyler-Smith associates this with a monetary reform carried out by Khusrau II and although this has been questioned there is now no doubt as to the amount of material involved. After his deposition Khusrau II was accused by his political enemies of hoarding coins and this accusation would appear to have been justified. Hoards composed of coins post-dating 601–602 are curiously less frequent. One would expect more hoards to have been deposited during the Arab conquest. This could be the accident of discovery and recording, but it is possible that the demand on coin supply needed to sustain the Sasanian war effort in the latter part of Khusrau II's reign meant that less was available for hoarding in the palace treasuries. We have no indication of when the silver was released. From what is known of the volume of the pre-reform 'Arab-Sasanian' silver coinage, it was not issued on the scale either of the Sasanian coinage or the post-reform Umayyad dirhams. The Arabs may have retained captured silver until the reform, or released it gradually as it was discovered.

What is clear is that very few Sasanian or Arab-Sasanian coins found their way to Syria. Isolated examples, even a small hoard, are recorded but there is no sign of an excessive number of coins of Khusrau II.³⁷

The suggestion that a good deal of gold was released from the Sasanian treasury is also unsubstantiated. Quite apart from the fact that the Sasanians rarely coined in gold there is not much hard evidence of its use in jewellery and plate. If the Sasanian treasury really contained huge gold reserves, the Arab's appropriation of them left no mark on the currency of seventh century Iran. If found, the gold could have been remitted by the provincial governors to Damascus, though given the often hostile relations between the two, this seems improbable. There would have been substantial tax

³⁶ S. Tyler-Smith, *The coinage reforms (600–603) of Khusru II and the revolt of Vistāhm* (Royal Numismatic Society Special Publications 54), London 2017.

³⁷ S. D. Sears/D. T. Ariel, Finds of late Sasanian and early Muslim drachms in historical Palestine, *Atiqot* 40 (2000), 139–150. Howard-Johnston, *Last great war* (as footnote 25), 157, misinterprets the coin hoard evidence as showing that Sasanian coins did reach Syria during the occupation. The hoards he cites are too late to justify this conclusion.

receipts in gold from the period of the occupation which could have been stored in Iran. Although, with a single exception, there seem to be no recorded finds of Byzantine gold in Iran, there is evidence of Byzantine solidi reaching Iran since Arab-Sasanian coppers exist in large numbers which copy solidi of Heraclius.³⁸ Unfortunately they have no indication of mint or date.

Very recently a hoard of 64 gold solidi has been reported from Arbela in Iraqi Kurdistan. The latest coins are of Constans II though the majority are of Heraclius. As with all such parcels the precise place of discovery is uncertain but the hoard does seem to come from Iraq. As such it is unique and until more such hoards are discovered with more certain provenances the evidence for the circulation of gold in the lands of the conquered Sasanian empire remains tenuous.³⁹ Essentially I would argue that there is no reason to think that the Arabs found large quantities of gold in Persia and even if they did it was not turned into coin until after the reform.

As has already been noted from the papyri, admittedly a tiny sample, a certain amount of gold was raised in tax by the Persians but this was from existing coin stock not gold made freshly available by recent de-thesaurisation. The Persians could not have maintained this system indefinitely unless fresh supplies were forthcoming from Constantinople.

The situation in Syria contrasts dramatically with that in the provinces south of the Danube which were overrun in the second decade of the seventh century. Finds of Byzantine coins all but disappear. In these areas recent archaeological work does show evidence of continuing commercial contacts (some of it quite long range) and Romanian archaeologists are keen to emphasise the degree to which 'classical civilisation' survived. It may have done, but it was not coin using. The vast amounts of solidi paid to the Avars were turned into jewellery or at least they do not survive as coins. The Byzantines had certainly not lost interest in the area, including the regions beyond the old frontiers, and both Constans II and Constantine IV (r. 668–85) led campaigns there. There is copious evidence of diplomatic payments to the local tribes, much of it in silver, and the occasional hoard, but the coins did not circulate as coins. This applies equally to copper coins, valuable both as jewellery and for artefacts, as to precious metal.⁴⁰

38 R. Gyselen, *Arab-Sasanian copper coinage*, Vienna 2009, types 80, 81, 85 (commonest type) 97. The issue was substantial to judge by the numbers published by H.M. Malek, *Arab-Sasanian numismatics and history during the early Islamic period in Iran and Iraq* (Royal Numismatic Society Special Publications 55) London 2019.

39 F.L. Sánchez/D.M. Chico, A hoard of seventh century Byzantine solidi found in Arbela, *Numismatic Chronicle* 179 (2019), 388–396 and plates 50–52.

40 See the work by A. Gandila, *Cultural encounters on Byzantium's northern frontier c.AD 500–700*, Cambridge 2018, 183–189 and 263–274. For coin supply in general the best survey is A. Gandila, Early Byzantine coin circulation in the eastern provinces: a statistical approach, *American Journal of Numismatics* 21 (2009), 151–226.

The supply of fresh Byzantine coins: Gold

It is perhaps worth emphasising that the general recognition of the presence of large quantities of official Byzantine coins in post-conquest Syria is a relatively recent discovery. It seems to have been tacitly assumed that, until the reforms of 'Abd al-Malik, the economy somehow simply made do with existing stocks. Banaji's insistence on the importance of expropriated church treasure is only an extension of this idea.⁴¹ In 1976 it was possible for Michael Bates to argue that the minting of what is now called the phase 2 'Arab-Byzantine' coinage could be squeezed into a few years before the introduction of the phase 3 'Standing Caliph' coinage in 74/693–694. He paid no attention to the 'pseudo-Byzantine' issue which was then little known.⁴²

As far as I am aware Bates was also the first scholar to point out that new coin, both gold and copper was being imported from Byzantium. He assumed this was partly booty but also that a trade existed in gold. Since this was illegal under Byzantine law the solidi would have been expensive. The turning point was the imposition of a tribute of 365,000 solidi a year imposed by Justinian II (first reign 685–695) in 685 which rapidly drained the available resources. *Per* Bates 'Abd al-Malik perceived the inconvenience and economic loss that resulted from the absence of minting and proceeded to remedy the situation.'

Bates thought it odd that it should have taken the imposition of the tribute for the Arabs to wake up to the situation but for an explanation he could only fall back on a combination of 'conservatism' and 'pre-occupation with other matters'.⁴³ It hardly fits with the sophisticated proto-capitalist view of them envisaged by Banaji.

The presence of Byzantine coins in post-conquest Syria raises a number of questions. What exactly was the relationship between the two states which were nominally at war for most of period in question? Why did the Arabs tolerate the coins for so long? How were they used? Did the Byzantine authorities acquiesce in the export of gold, which was technically illegal, or are the coins simply the product of booty or tribute, in which case why were they not melted down?

Recent discussion of the gold coinage has already been mentioned. I have tried to compile a picture of the occurrence of copper coins.⁴⁴ What has not so far been attempted is to discuss the two together particularly in the light of their defined roles in the fiscal system. The coins had to be moved from Constantinople to Syria. In the ancient and medieval worlds precious metal and objects could be transported from one

⁴¹ Banaji insists that hardly any new gold coin reached Syria after the conquest even though this is contradicted by the hoards he quotes, Banaji, *Precious metal coinage* (as footnote 5), 121–127.

⁴² M. Bates, *The Arab-Byzantine coinage of Syria: an innovation by Abd al-Malik*, in: *A colloquium in memory of George Carpenter Miles*, New York 1976, 16–27.

⁴³ M. Bates, *History, geography and numismatics in the first century of Islamic coinage*, *Revue Suisse de Numismatique* 65 (1986), 231–62, at 252, n 3.

⁴⁴ M. Phillips, *Import* (as footnote 28), 39–72.

state to another for four reasons which in practice overlapped: trade, high level gift exchange, tribute and booty. One example of the latter particularly relevant to the present discussion is the extended raid on Cyprus in 649/50. A Syriac source has a detailed account of the immense booty looted by Mu'āwiya from the island. The historian al-Ṭabarī (d. 923) records that the subsequent peace treaty involved the Byzantines paying an annual tribute of 7,000 dinars.⁴⁵ This was not particularly high compared to what they had paid the Avars. Such payments usually took the form of coin, though it could also be artefacts.⁴⁶ Gift exchange certainly took place later on and al-Ṭabarī claims that Justinian II (second reign 705–711) sent craftsmen and 100,000 *mithqāls* of gold to al-Walīd I (r. 705–715) to help repair a mosque. Al-Ṭabarī has a curious story of gift exchange between the Empress Martina and Umm Kulthūm, the wife of 'Umar I (r. 634–644), including a superb necklace which caused her ascetic husband some difficulties.⁴⁷ It shows perhaps that diplomatic gift exchange between the two states was very unusual at this early stage.

Depending on how seriously one takes these figures, it would seem that fairly large quantities of gold Byzantine coins reached Syria at this time and this is backed up by the recorded hoards. Although there is no proof, one can assume the Arabs used it to levy tax and pay their army and officials. If any of the gold reached Syria officially through 'trade', on the other hand, it must also have been sanctioned by the Byzantine state. The illicit export of Byzantine gold would have been expensive, as Bates pointed out.

The supply of fresh Byzantine coins: Copper

The question of the presence of large quantities of copper coin raises different problems. Base metal coin tends to be associated with local trade rather than diplomacy or tax. Its use in paying the army is held to involve official money changers. It is heavy and inconvenient to move. Individual coins and small parcels can make extraordinary journeys. I have seen a Chinese cash that almost certainly came from Lebanon. Small quantities of Alexandrian 12 nummi are recorded from Palestinian coastal sites and at

⁴⁵ Chronicle of 1234, deriving from Theophilus of Edessa, R. Hoyland, *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle* (Translated Texts for Historians 57), Liverpool 2011, 131–135; Ṭabarī 1, 2826, trans. R. Stephen Humphreys, *The history of al-Ṭabarī*. 15, *The crisis of the early caliphate*, New York 1985, 30.

⁴⁶ Cf the two important papers by A. Cutler, Silver across the Euphrates. Forms of exchange between Sasanian and the late Roman empire, and Gifts and gift exchange as aspects of the Byzantine Arab and related economies, both reprinted in *Image making in Byzantium, Sasanian Persia and the early Muslim world*, Farnham 2009.

⁴⁷ Al-Ṭabarī 1, 2823, trans. Humphreys (as footnote 45), 27–28. This is part of a bizarre account of an amicable philosophical exchange between Heraclius and 'Umar. It is out of sequence and presumably not very creditable. It shows perhaps that diplomatic gift exchange between the two states was very unusual at this early stage.

least one (possibly two) hoards, thought to be of Cypriot origin, have been found in a wreck off the coast of Israel.⁴⁸ There was then a certain amount of coastal trade. I have always argued that the sheer quantity of official Byzantine copper coins and their widespread circulation is too great to be explained by casual losses through commercial contacts and that their presence in Syria reflects an official policy decision to export them. Cyprus played a key role in this as it had since the days of the *Quaestura exercitus*.⁴⁹

Even if one does not accept this argument there are a number of facts that require explanation. Why should so many coins be found in Cyprus from the reigns of Heraclius and Constans II when there are comparatively few from earlier reigns? Indeed in the following two centuries coin finds virtually disappear from the island although plenty of Byzantine lead seals have been found.⁵⁰ Why should one specific type, the *Inper Const*, (discussed below) issue be found in Cyprus and the adjacent mainland but nowhere else? If 'trade' is the explanation for the presence of the coins in Syria, why do Byzantine coins disappear from the Balkans even though there is ample evidence of continued Byzantine interest in the area? Likewise, if ordinary unregulated trade was involved, why was the flow one way? Very few local Syrian products (i.e. pseudo- and Arab-Byzantine copper coins) found their way to Cyprus. Why and when did the flow of coin cease?

It is worth looking at the coinage of Constans II in more detail in the light of some recent evidence. It presents a paradox. On the one hand, it was innovative in conveying a new 'Constantinian' propaganda message (Fig. 4a). The frequent changes in type point to considerable concern and ingenuity on the part of the mint officials, if no one else, in arranging the design and legends. On the other hand, it is a bye-word for wretched production standards which would seem to have negated any positive impact it might potentially have had. Having handled large numbers of the coins, my feeling is that this is exaggerated. The early issues certainly indicate a degree of confusion as to how to arrange the new legends which culminated in regnal year three (643–4) with a number of different types being issued. To begin with, standards were good with very little overstriking, but they deteriorated after year four and coinage ceased after year seven. Legends were then virtually abandoned, making it possible to concentrate on the designs, which show good inventive engraving despite poor manufacture. There are signs of a weight increase at the end of the reign.⁵¹ Although

48 D. Syon/E. Galili, Byzantine-period bronze coins from the sea at Dor, *Atiqot* 61 (2009), 81–94.

49 Phillips, Import (as footnote 28), 48–58. The data from Israel is comprehensively updated by G. Bijovsky, Arab-Byzantine coins from excavations in Israel – an update, in: A. Oddy/I. Schulze/W. Schulze (eds), *Coinage and History* 4 (see Appendix), 95–114.

50 D.M. Metcalf, *Coinage as evidence for the changing prosperity of Cyprus in Byzantine and Medieval times*, Nicosia 2003.

51 The standard account remains G. Bates, Constans II or Heraclonas? An analysis of the Constantinopolitan folles of Constans II, *American Numismatic Society Museum Notes* 17 (1971), 141–161, but this

seemingly far-fetched, it was a perfectly sound political choice to try to ensure that these coins should circulate in the temporarily occupied territories as a reminder of the imperial presence.



Figs. 4a–b: Constantinople follis of Constans II with the legend ‘By this sign conquer’, 641/2 (a) and the *Inper Const* type (643/4), found in Cyprus, Rhodes and Syria, but not Anatolia (b) (Photo: M.T. Catalano, Köln, Institut für Altertumskunde, ID172 and ID166).

There is the question of when did the flow stop? For unexplained reasons the issue of copper coins of Constans II ceased on several occasions: between regnal years 8 and 10 (648–649 and 650–651), in year 18 (658–659), in year 24 (664–665). The final issue (666–668?) is undated. The last years are less common than the earlier ones, but is this because less were being struck or because the supply was being cut off? If one looks at the figures empire wide, it seems that coin supply contracted in Syria after 660 compared to elsewhere. This is misleading since the numbers of coins recorded in Greece, and especially Athens which are unusually high, distort the picture because of the presence of the imperial court there after 660. As far as finds from Anatolia are concerned, Hendy argued that there was a decisive reduction in the issue of copper coins after 660 because of administrative and fiscal changes as part of a wholesale

badly needs revision. The best diagrammatic presentation of the typology is O. Callot, *Salamine de Chypre*.16, *Les Monnaies*, Paris 2004, 77–78.

reform of military organisation.⁵² The Anatolian excavation data, which Hendy relied on, has now been questioned in the light of material from Amorion, Pergamon, Pompeiopolis and elsewhere.⁵³ It is now fashionable to see the decline as more gradual and beginning around the middle of the seventh century.⁵⁴ This accords with the Syrian data. The evidence from Israel, in particular, indicates that there was a reduction in the supply after 660 but it did not stop until 668.⁵⁵ In other words the fluctuations in coin supply to Syria simply mirror those elsewhere with the exception of the *Inper Const* issues.

The *Inper Const* coinage is an anomalous type dated regnal years three and eleven – the latter being quite scarce (Fig. 4b). Instead of Greek legends and a standing figure, it depicts a facing bust and a reverse in the traditional style. Its distribution suggests that it was deliberately sent to Cyprus for export to the mainland. This suggests that the emperor's portrait was seen as a morale booster. Again, the grotesque nature of the portrait on many of the coins makes this difficult to accept. It has recently emerged the type also occurs in relatively high numbers on the island of Rhodes. Of 64 coins of classes 1 to 4 of Constans II found there, 30 are the *Inper Const* type.⁵⁶ There seems to have been no military threat to Rhodes at this time, though it was occupied later. It appears that the type was for some reason sent to the two islands, but not elsewhere.

This raises another point. If coins of Constans II, in particular *Inper Const*, were sent to Cyprus for exporting to the mainland, why are so many found on the island? As already pointed out, the Heraclius coins with the Cyprus mintmark are rarely found there, presumably because they were sent directly to the mainland. There is also the matter of the process involved in transporting them to the mainland. It seems unlikely that the Cypriot authorities simply shipped the coins in bags and left them on the beach! The phenomenon can only be explained by a degree of co-operation on both sides. The Byzantine authorities moved the coins to Cyprus. There was then

52 Hendy, *Studies* (as footnote 12), 640–644. For the nature of these reforms see also J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the seventh century: the transformation of a culture*, Cambridge, 2nd ed. 1997, 147–149, 226, 240–241.

53 This is discussed at length by Max Ritter in a forthcoming article on the Pompeiopolis excavation coins. I am very grateful to him for letting me see the text of this article and for additional information. The new excavation material from Anatolia confirms the total absence of the *Inper Const* type from that region.

54 W. Brandes/J. F. Haldon, Towns, tax and transformation: state, cities and their hinterlands in the east Roman world, c.500–800, in: G.P. Brogiolo/N. Gauthier/N. Christie (eds), *Towns and their territories between late antiquity and the early middle ages*, Leiden 2000, 141–172, esp. 150–153.

55 This alters my conclusion in the publication of the Hama hoard which dated the ending of the imports to 660. M. Phillips/T. Goodwin, A seventh-century Syrian hoard of Byzantine and imitative copper coins, *Numismatic Chronicle* 157 (1997), 61–87.

56 A.M. Kasdagli, *Coins in Rhodes. From the monetary reforms of Anastasius I until the Ottoman Conquest*, Oxford 2018, 32.

some local agreement of uncertain status (official, semi-official, mercantile) by which the coins were moved to the mainland and then made available, presumably to local money changers appointed by whoever was in charge in the area. They functioned as small change to the gold coins being used for larger payments and for tax revenue.

The coinage of Constantine IV

Constantine IV issued large copper folles and appropriate fractions. The occasional 10 nummia occurs but, as far as I am aware, the larger denominations – folles and half folles – are absent from Syria. It is not at all obvious that they ever circulated widely outside Constantinople. Whether there was ever a serious intention of carrying out a reform, returning the copper coinage to the weight standards of Justinian I (r. 527–65), or whether the larger denominations were only ever conceived as primarily ceremonial, is hard to say. The end effect was to drastically curtail the production of new copper coins everywhere and bring the supply to Syria to an end.

Constantine IV's second innovation was to change the style of the gold. Under him this had become increasingly crude (Fig. 5a). In 681 a change was necessary because Constantine had just disposed of his two associate emperors who had been depicted on the coins. A new engraver produced a coin in a much improved, classical, style which, like the copper, harkened back to the glorious days of Justinian I (Fig. 5b). It was at this point that the flow of gold coin to Syria ceased because only two of these coins are recorded in the hoards.⁵⁷ This could, of course, be because the hoards were deposited before 681; but two contain single examples of coins of Justinian II, so they must be later. Bijovsky associates the burial of the hoards with the reforms of 'Abd al-Malik, but they could equally reflect the disturbances caused by the Muslim's second civil war (680–692).⁵⁸ Both explanations would imply a deposit date after 681. The sources agree that it was in 677–678 when, following a serious naval defeat of the Arabs, the aging Mu'āwiya signed a treaty with Constantine IV which included a relatively modest tribute of 3,000 solidi a year. Is it a coincidence that it is exactly at this point that the flow of gold to Syria effectively ceased? This tribute was increased to 365,000 solidi in 685 when 'Abd al-Malik was under extreme pressure during the ongoing civil war.⁵⁹ It seems, therefore, that up to the late 670s, Byzantine gold reached

57 This is clear from the table in Bijovsky, Bet She'an (as footnote 35), 183, which shows no coins for Constantine IV after 681. The two mentioned in the text are listed in Bijovsky's revised publication of the Rehov hoard. G. Bijovsky, A Byzantine gold hoard from Rehov (H. Parwa), *Israel Numismatc Research* 7 (2012), 147–158.

58 According to de Callatay, Coin deposits (as footnote 16), civil wars seem to register more hoards than other disturbances.

59 J. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a world crisis*, Oxford 2010, 495, n. 19 (treaty of 677/678); 497 n. 27 (treaty of 685).

Syria primarily through capture and tribute which was reversed after 677–678. If it had reached Syria by ‘trade’, there is no reason why it should have stopped with the change in military fortunes. That ‘Abd al-Malik managed to pay the tribute, at least for a while, indicates that he had access to large amounts of coin given the other demands on his resources.



Figs. 5a–b: Constantine IV's gold solidi of Class 3 (674–81) (a) and Class 4 (681–5) (b) (Photo: American Numismatic Society, 1977.158.1088 and 1977.158.1089).

The presence of Byzantine coins in Syria naturally focuses interests on the question of contacts between the two empires outside the military and commercial sphere; a neglected subject. There were periods of relative peace, notably the 640s, 657–662 and the period after 678. A recent study by M. Jankowiak looking at the rather sparse records of pilgrims and clerics, going backwards and forwards, to attend synods etc. shows that these correspond very well with the periods of relative peace and stop completely when hostilities flared up.⁶⁰ It does not correspond particularly well with the fluctuations in the import of copper coins if the latter really shows a falling off after 660, because this was a time when relations were relatively stable. Essentially

⁶⁰ M. Jankowiak, *Travelling across borders. A church historian's perspective on contacts between Byzantium and Syria in the second half of the seventh century*, in: T. Goodwin (ed.), *Arab-Byzantine Coins and History* [3] (see Appendix), 13–25.

the flow of copper coins matches what we know of production overall, not military activity or the lack of it.

The debate about the timing of the cessation of Byzantine coin imports (660 or 668) may seem trivial, but it is important. 660 is a crucial date because this was when Mu'āwiya had defeated his enemies and become unchallenged ruler of Syria. If the Arabs had any political consciousness of the significance of Byzantine coinage circulating in their territories, this would have been a good time to end it and begin to produce coins of their own. If, on the other hand, the flow was only starting to dwindle after 660 and did not really halt until 668, it would show that it was not regarded as politically urgent. It also coincides, more or less, with the beginning of the phase 2 ('Arab-Byzantine') coinage which is now dated to c.670.

A new interpretation

A radical solution to the problem of how the copper coins reached Syria has recently been proposed by S. Maxfield. His starting point is Hendy's view of the role of copper in military payments as described above. According to this, the copper coins can only be evidence of large-scale Byzantine troop movements even though the established historical accounts regard the region as having been permanently conquered by the Arabs. Maxfield strongly questions the reliability of the Arab sources and seeks to revise established interpretations of the few contemporary non-Arab ones.⁶¹ He even has an explanation for the lack of coins of Constans II dated years 7 to 9, namely that there was a peace treaty and no need for new coins. If this seems far-fetched, one has to admit that no one has ever put forward an alternative explanation for this lack of coins. Maxfield also traces changes in the output and design of the later issues of Constans II to political developments in Byzantium as yet one more example of coins as propaganda.

This explicit insistence on the primacy of numismatic over (available) literary evidence is difficult for historians to come to terms with and I have not seen any attempt to counter Maxfield's arguments. What this does illustrate is the importance of the view one takes of the function of coinage in the ancient world. Not everyone agrees with Hendy.

⁶¹ S. Maxfield, Using the iconography and inscriptions on Heracleian dynasty coins to construct an historical narrative of the 7th century Byzantine empire in: T. Goodwin (ed.), *Coinage and History* 6 (see appendix) 19–34. The armies in question would have been full scale and well equipped forces complete with baggage trains including money changers, not guerrillas like the Mardaites whose later presence is well attested.

The beginnings of domestic coin production

The pseudo-Byzantine coinage

The imitations of contemporary Byzantine copper coins of Heraclius and Constans II have only recently attracted much interest. They have been arranged by H. Pottier, I. and W. Schulze, according to the typology and metrology of the supposed prototypes, in a comprehensive article but the conclusions of this are not universally accepted.⁶² The authors argue that the production of imitations started almost immediately after the conquest in the shape of imitations of the three figure types of Heraclius. Furthermore, the associated weight standards and typology of the different types define the chronology, and the weights are consistent enough to show a fair degree of organisation and control. This is true for certain groups, some of which are of quite good style, but the overwhelmingly majority of the imitations copy the early issues of Constans II and all too many look like the work of unskilled local workshops. The existence of the imitations is held to indicate that, in spite of the presence of large numbers of official Byzantine coins, there was still a shortage of small change which the copies remedied. This implies a buoyant economy where the need for cash was increasing. Even if this was the case a base metal coinage with a low intrinsic value has to be related to some standard. Under the Romans this had been controlled by the state, but unless whoever was organising the coinage fixed the exchange rates, the result would have been massive inflation.

Consequently the decision to begin the phase 2 (Arab-Byzantine) coinage whether it was taken centrally or just involved a degree of co-operation between local authorities might equally well reflect the existence of too much copper coinage rather than too little.

A historical parallel: Seventeenth century England

Although it may be stretching the point, I would suggest the situation in Syria may have been similar to that of eighteenth century England, not merely in terms of the existence of huge numbers of imitations, but also the official reaction. In 1753 it was estimated that only half of the copper coins in circulation were genuine. The situation had deteriorated by 1787 when the Royal Mint reported that only 8% of the coins then in circulation 'had some tolerable resemblance to the king's coin'. In 1789 the *Gentlemen's Magazine* even claimed that in Scotland people rejected the king's coin in fa-

⁶² H. Pottier/I. Schulze/W. Schulze, Pseudo-Byzantine coinage in Syria under Arab rule (638–c.670). Classification and dating, *Revue Belge de Numismatique* 154 (2008), 87–155.

vour of the 'evasives'.⁶³ The latter was the term used to describe copies which reproduced the designs of the official coins but with different legends to avoid the laws on forgery. Although there was a wide variety in legends, die analysis has shown that they were produced by a few large scale manufacturers. We are still a long way from knowing to what extent this was the case with the pseudo-Byzantine series.

Commenting on the situation the king's chief assayer, J. Harris, used language that might well have been written by a medieval Muslim jurist:

'Copper coins with us are properly not money but a kind of token passing by way of exchange instead of parts of the smallest pieces of silver coin.'

He admitted that they were useful but 'These base coins should never be thrust upon the public in too great abundance; or be made to pass for more than the value of the copper or the necessary expense of workmanship otherwise they will be counterfeited notwithstanding any law to the contrary'.⁶⁴

Once the supply of official Byzantine copper had begun to decrease there would have been a financial incentive to produce imitations. This, rather than the benign intervention of the local authorities concerned at the shortage of small change, is more likely to have provoked the mass of the pseudo-Byzantine coins. There may be evidence that some of the workshops, or at least the same craftsmen, were the same as worked on the first of the phase 2 ('Arab-Byzantine') coins but the topic is still virtually unexplored.

Although it is possible that local church authorities were involved in the issue of the coins, and even fixed exchange rates, there is no evidence either way. If the church authorities were involved it was essentially because there was no one else.⁶⁵ At what point did the Arab authorities seriously begin to concern themselves with the coinage?

The 'Arab-Byzantine' coinage

The consensus now is that the Arab-Byzantine series began around 670 which would tie in with the date that the import of Byzantine coins ceased. The phase 2 ('Arab-

⁶³ See the discussion in C.W. Peck, *English copper, tin and bronze coins in the British Museum*, London, 2nd ed. 1970, 206, 214–215.

⁶⁴ J. Harris, *An essay upon money and coins*, 2 vols, London 1757–1758, 45 note and 205. The long title of the second volume 'Wherein is shewed, that the established standard of money should not be violated or altered, under any pretence whatsoever', would presumably also have received Islamic endorsement.

⁶⁵ Cf Brown, *The world of late antiquity* (as footnote 19), 187: 'The bishops who negotiated with the Muslim generals in the name of their towns during the lightning conquests of the 640s were confirmed for a thousand years to come in the position they had imperceptibly won for themselves since the reign of Justinian'.

Byzantine') coins identify their mint of origin, though there is considerable regional variation in design. Apart from the mint, the only other inscriptions are epithets which serve to emphasise the weight and authenticity of the coins. This suggests that there were too many false and low weight coins already in circulation. Although a number of mints have been identified, there were only four (or perhaps five) major ones: Emesa/Himş, Damascus/Dimashq, Tiberias/Ṭabariya, probably Heliopolis/Baalbek and the Scythopolis/Jerash group. Taking the coinage as a whole about half the number one sees are the facing bust type of Emesa/Himş which kept to reasonable standards of design and weight and whose coins show evidence of a system of control marks.⁶⁶

Too many basic questions remain unanswered. The apparent standardisation of the typology suggests a degree of central initiative, but it could have been that one authority started the issue and others followed suit. Unless the phase 3 ('Standing Caliph') copper coins were introduced before the gold (the earliest is dated 74AH= 693–694 AD) a view which is generally discounted, then the Phase 2 issue lasted over 20 years assuming it started in 670. From what is known of the coinage, this seems too long.

As research has progressed a disconcerting number of coins of phase 2 ('Arab-Byzantine') have been identified which closely copy the legends and designs of a known mint, but they are clearly anomalous. An increasing number of die links between different mints has also emerged. The position is summed up in an article by I. Schulze with the disconcerting title 'Can we believe what is written on the coins?'⁶⁷ If there was a programme of centralisation, it would seem to have stalled. The lack of new Byzantine gold coins after 681 together with the start of the second civil war must have had serious effects on the fiscal system and could have led to the temporary closure of some of the mints.

The first clear sign of government involvement is the phase 3 ('Standing Caliph') coinage which appeared to show not only an attempt at centralised minting but also a concern with the political significance of coin design. As work, mostly in the form of die studies, on this series has progressed a more complicated picture has emerged. This is perhaps best illustrated by the mint of Damascus which should have been at the administrative centre of the coinage. Coins with literate inscriptions and the mint name spelled correctly are surprisingly rare and some are so crude that they appear to be the product of another (unofficial?) mint or mints. In Jund Qinnasrīn, a few main mints produced coins in their own distinctive styles, but these were complemented by a network of smaller workshops producing coins in the names of several mints that are easier to arrange by their obverse styles than by the 'mint names'. How

⁶⁶ This line of reasoning was suggested to me by Tony Goodwin, Emesa / Himş still lacks a comprehensive study but see W. A. Oddy, The 'Constans II' bust type of Arab Byzantine coins of Hims, *Revue Numismatique* 29 (1987), 192–197.

⁶⁷ I. Schulze, Can we believe what is written on the coins? Enigmatic die links and other puzzles, in: A. Oddy/I. Schulze/W. Schulze (eds) *Coinage and History* 4 (see Appendix), 115–135.

this is to be fitted into the overall picture of the Standing Caliph issue remains to be seen.⁶⁸

By the time the Islamic series had become established Muslim jurists agreed with the views of J. Harris that copper coins had ceased to be 'money'. A *fals* had a far smaller intrinsic value than the arbitrary token value assigned to it by its issuer. This meant that its value and acceptance was too variable to be the foundation of a partnership or contract. The earliest codified account is probably in the writings of Muḥammad al-Shaybānī (d. 805), but the principle may well have been formulated earlier. According to L. Ilisch, the roots of the problem lay in the failure of repeated attempts to centralise production of copper coin, going back to the reforms of 'Abd al-Malik.⁶⁹ The hyperactive (to use Walmsley's apt phrase) minting of the seventh century may well have started the process.

Conclusions

The coin evidence for Syria indicates a continuous if attenuated supply of new gold coin from Constantinople until the second civil war. If gold had been forthcoming from a different source (e.g. Persia) it would either have come in the form of very old Roman or Byzantine coin or uncoined gold. The relevant hoards show no evidence of old Byzantine coins and new coins were not struck on any scale until after the reform. It follows that the monetary figures quoted by the later Arabic chroniclers cannot be accepted uncritically, at least for this early period.

The presence of copper coins indicates continued Byzantine interest in Syria and the liveliness of the local economy. The Byzantines were using coins as a political instrument and for a remarkably long time the Arabs were indifferent to this. Attitudes probably developed decisively during the heightened ideological tension of the second civil war. By the time of the Standing Caliph issue copper coins were regarded as an appropriate propaganda medium. This can only have been due to Byzantine influence.

As our knowledge of the coinage of seventh century Syria increases, it should be regarded as an opportunity to test the rival theories about the role of coinage in ancient society. Making do with simple assumptions is to forgo this opportunity.

To judge solely from the coins the immediate effect of the Arab conquest was nil. Taken in the context of the whole century, one can see its effect in long term changes, particularly the weakening of the idea of the classical state. At this point, I would

⁶⁸ I. Schulze, Die chains and die links with the mint name Ḥalab, in: T. Goodwin (ed.), *Coinage and History* 6 (see appendix) 143–164; I. Schulze, The enigmatic minting of Standing Caliph coins in jund Qinnasrīn, in: T. Goodwin (ed.), *Coinage and History* 7 (see appendix).

⁶⁹ L. Ilisch, 'Abd- al Malik's reform in copper and the failure of centralization, in: Haldon (ed.), *Money, power and politics* (as footnote 5), 115–146.

argue that it is worth borrowing from western historiography and using the terms ‘ancient’ to ‘medieval’.

Although I do not subscribe entirely to the ‘primitivist’ (I prefer ‘statist’) view of ancient coinage, the overriding purpose of issuing coin was in the interests of the state. The touchstone is how far the state can support a negotiable fiduciary currency, that is, a currency issued in the interest of the state for fiscal purposes. Medieval states in the west did not. This is a sign that coinage was serving a different function.⁷⁰ This leaves early Islamic coinage balanced between the two, but the overriding trend was against a universal fiduciary currency and, possibly, this had its origins in the ‘hyperactive’ minting of the seventh century. At all events in contrast to the Byzantines, neither the medieval west nor the Caliphate were able to issue a universal fiduciary copper coinage.

Appendix. Publications of the seventh century Syria numismatic roundtable

The meetings of the Round Table aim to bring together numismatists, archaeologists and historians.⁷¹ The published series contains much of the original research that has appeared in recent years but its use presents difficulties for non-numismatists.

The *Proceedings* tend not to be available outside specialist libraries and the numbering system is confused. They have different titles and editors; some are numbered others are not. There is much specialised numismatic discussion and ‘work in progress’, sometimes superseded in subsequent volumes. On the other hand there is good deal of substantive material and findings which are not available elsewhere.

Partly to avoid cluttering the footnotes in the present article and partly to enable non-specialists to consult the relevant volumes, full publication details are listed here.

Unnumbered editions have the number in parenthesis.

- [1] *Coinage and History in the Seventh Century Near East* Published as a *Supplement to the Journal of the Oriental Numismatic Society* 193, Autumn 2007.

Subsequent volumes have been published by Archetype Publications.

- [2] A. Oddy (ed.), *Coinage and History in the Seventh Century Near East. Proceedings of the 12th Seventh Century Syrian Numismatic Round Table held at Gonville and Caius College Cambridge, on the 4th and 5th April 2009*, London 2010.

⁷⁰ This is sketched in M. Phillips, *Coinage and the early Arab state*, in: A. Oddy/I. Schulze/W. Schulze (eds), *Coinage and History* 4 (as footnote 28), but the subject needs a much deeper treatment.

⁷¹ For a, now slightly dated, history of the meetings see M. Phillips, *The contribution of the meetings of the seventh century Syria Numismatic Round table (1992–2011) to the study of early Islamic coinage*, *Transactions of the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg*, 81 (2017), 47–52.

- [3] T. Goodwin (ed.), *Arab Byzantine Coins and History. Papers presented at the [13th] Seventh Century Syrian Numismatic Round Table held at Corpus Christi College, Oxford on 10th and 11th September 2011*, London 2012.
- [4] A. Oddy, I. Schulze and W. Schulze (eds), *Coinage and History in the Seventh Century Near East. Proceedings of the 14th Seventh Century Syrian Numismatic Round Table held at The Hive, Worcester, on the 28th and 29th September 2013*, London 2015.
- [5] T. Goodwin (ed.), *Coinage and History in the Seventh Century Near East. Proceedings of the 15th Seventh Century Syrian Numismatic Round Table held at Corpus Christi College, Oxford on the 17th and 18th September 2016*, London 2017.
- [6] T. Goodwin (ed.), *Coinage and History in the Seventh Century Near East. Proceedings of the 16th Seventh Century Syrian Numismatic Round Table held at Corpus Christi College, Oxford on the 6th and 7th April 2019*, London 2020.
- [7] T. Goodwin (ed.), *Coinage and History in the Seventh Century Near East. Proceedings of the 17th Seventh Century Syrian Numismatic Round Table held at Corpus Christi College, Oxford on the 26th and 27th April 2022*, London 2023.

Part V: **Reflections**

Argumentum Ex Silentio*. Religiöse Überzeugungsstrategie in der iberischen Chronik *Continuatio Byzantia-Arabica

Die islamische Eroberung des Westgotenreiches setzte der Tradition der lateinischen Geschichtsschreibung auf der iberischen Halbinsel kein Ende. Die Historiographie, die dort in spätantiken und frühmittelalterlichen Zeiten eine besondere Blüte erlebte, wurde auch nach der Eroberung fortgeschrieben, was zwei Chroniken aus dem achten nachchristlichen Jahrhundert bezeugen.¹ Die in lateinischer Sprache verfassten Chroniken, von denen eine auf das Jahr 741, die andere auf das Jahr 754 zu datieren ist, gehören zu den relativ wenigen zeitgenössischen literarischen Zeugnissen der Eroberung und sind gleichzeitig die materialreichsten.² Die Chronik aus dem Jahr 754 bietet eine christlich geprägte Darstellung der Ereignisse. Die Chronik aus dem Jahr 741 stellt hingegen bis heute in mancherlei Hinsicht ein Rätsel für die Forschung dar.³

Diese Chronik ist in vier Handschriften überliefert (von denen eine im 13. Jahrhundert entstand und die drei anderen im 16.), die alle auf eine einzelne und seit 1671 nicht mehr vorhandene Handschrift (*Codex Soriensis*) zurückgehen, die wohl auf das 9. oder 10. Jahrhundert zu datieren ist. Zu dem Überlieferungskontext dieses Werkes zählen unter anderem die Chronik des Eusebius in der Überarbeitung von Hieronymus, die Chroniken des Prosper von Aquitanien, Victor von Tunnuna, Johannes von Biclaro und Isidor von Sevilla, sowie die Gotengeschichte des letztgenannten. Da die Chronik mit dem Tod Reccareds beginnt, lässt sich schließen, dass sie als Fortsetzung des Werkes von Johannes konzipiert war und dadurch das neueste Element einer Kette der Chroniken darstellte, derer Verfasser an ihre Vorgänger anknüpften und derer erstes Glied die Chronik des Eusebius-Hieronymus war.⁴

1 Vgl. C. E. Dubler, *Sobre la Crónica árabe-bizantina de 741 y la influencia bizantina en la Península Ibérica*, *Al-Andalus* 11 (1946), 283–349, hier 295.

2 Vgl. A. G. Sanjuan, *La conquista islámica de la Península Ibérica y la tergiversación del pasado. Del catastrofismo al negacionismo*, Madrid 2013, 172–188.

3 Diese Chronik ist gemeint, wenn ein Werk im Folgenden einfach als die Chronik bezeichnet wird.

4 J. C. Martín, *Los Chronica Byzantia-Arabica*, *e-Spania* 1 (2006), online: <http://journals.openedition.org/e-spania/329> (DOI: 10.4000/e-spania.329; letzter Zugriff: 25.02.2019). A. Christys, *Christians in al-Andalus (711–1000)*, Richmond 2002, 30–31; C.C. de Hartmann, *Der mozarabische Blick auf die Geschichte. Tradition und Identitätsbildung*, in: M. Maser/K. Herbers (Hrsg.), *Die Mozaraber Definitionen und Perspektiven der Forschung*, Berlin 2009, 39–63, hier 43–45. Auf den Wunsch des Verfassers, das Werk Johannes' von Biclaro fortzusetzen, weist auch sein Umgang mit der *Historiae Gothorum* Isidors von Sevilla hin, dessen Darstellung er erst ab Reccared aufnimmt (de Hartmann, *Der mozarabische Blick* (wie Anm. 4), 47, Anm. 47.). Die Meinung, dass die Chronik eher Johannes von Biclaro als Isidor fortsetzt, wird auch von R. Collins, *The Arab Conquest of Spain 710–797*, Oxford 1989, 54, geteilt.

Die Forschung neigt heute mehrheitlich dazu, die iberische Halbinsel als den Entstehungsort der Chronik anzusehen.⁵ Die relativ wenigen iberischen Quellen, die der Verfasser verwendet hat, lassen an einen Entstehungsort denken, der keinen leichten Zugang zur iberischen Geschichtsschreibung anzubieten hatte.⁶ Dagegen zeigt der Vergleich mit manchen östlichen Geschichtstexten (Nikephorus, Johannes von Nikiu, Theophanes)⁷ viele Ähnlichkeiten, die auf eine gemeinsame Grundlage schließen lassen. Eine hypothetische lateinische *Historia Arabum* und die mündlichen Überlieferungen muslimischer Eroberer sollen weitere Quellen der Chronik gewesen sein.⁸

Die Chronik, auch wenn sie mit der Schilderung der letzten Phase des Westgotenreiches beginnt, stellt zum größten Teil die Ereignisse im Osten dar: zunächst wird die byzantinische Geschichte geschildert, später geraten die siegreichen muslimischen Eroberer in den Vordergrund. Dieser Umstand erklärt auch, warum einer der Namen, unter denen die Chronik bekannt ist, *Continuatio Byzantia Arabica* lautet.⁹ Die Knappheit der Informationen, die mit der Eroberung des Westgotenreiches zu tun haben, wurde in der Forschung mehrmals betont. Auch wenn die Mehrheit der Informationen, die er übermittelte, sich auf die Geschehnisse im Osten bezog, stand der Verfasser in der Tradition der iberischen Geschichtsschreibung und knüpfte an Johannes von Biclaro und Isidor an.

Dieser Beitrag beschäftigt sich mit der rätselhaften Frage nach dem Religiösen und dessen Überzeugungskraft, die in der Chronik zum Ausdruck kommen. Bei diesem Aspekt fällt besonders auf, dass der Verfasser dem Religiösen relativ wenig Raum einräumte. Auf die Frage nach seiner religiösen Identität lieferte die bisherige Forschung grundsätzlich drei Antworten. Manche gehen von der christlichen Identität des Verfassers aus (die man von einem auf Latein schreibenden und in der bisherigen Tradition gut verankerten Schriftsteller eher erwarten würde), manche sehen in ihm aber auch einen zum Islam übergetretenen Konvertiten. Eine dritte Position plädiert für die Zusammenarbeit eines christlich erzogenen Autor mit einem muslimischen Mäzen.¹⁰

5 Laut Martín, *Los Chronica* (wie Anm. 4) griff der Verfasser auf eine Redaktion der Gotengeschichte Isidors zu, die bis ins 14. Jahrhundert hinein außerhalb iberischen Halbinsel nicht bekannt gewesen war.

6 Laut Martín, *Los Chronica* (wie Anm. 4).

7 Vgl. Christys, *Christians in al-Andalus* (wie Anm. 4), 40–41. Einen sorgfältigen Vergleich mit den östlichen Quellen verdanken wir Dubler, *Sobre la Crónica* (wie Anm. 1).

8 Collins, *The Arab Conquest* (wie Anm. 4), 56; Martín, *Los Chronica* (wie Anm. 4).

9 Mommsen gab sie unter dem Namen *Continuatio Byzantia Arabica a. DCCXLI* heraus (*MGH, Chronica minora* 2). Die Kapitelangaben in diesem Aufsatz erfolgen nach der neuesten Edition: J. Gil Fernández (Hrsg.), *Corpus Scriptorum Muzarabicorum* 1, Madrid 1973, 7–14. Die dort edierte Chronik wird im Folgenden kurz mit *Chronica* zitiert. Die Chronik aus dem 754 (*Chronica muzarabica*) wird ebenso nach J. Gil Fernández (Hrsg.), *Corpus Scriptorum Muzarabicorum* 1, Madrid 1973, 15–54 zitiert.

10 In seiner grundlegenden Studie plädiert Dubler, *Sobre la Crónica* (wie Anm. 1) für einen iberischen Konvertiten zum Islam. M. C. Díaz y Díaz, *La historiografía hispana desde la invasión árabe hasta el*

Zunächst muss aber auf eine Schwierigkeit, die sich aus unserer Fragestellung ergibt hingewiesen werden. Meistens wurde nämlich in Forschung nach der religiösen Zugehörigkeit des Verfassers gefragt, der entweder ein Christ oder ein Konvertit gewesen sein soll. Da sich aber eine Konversion im Prinzip stufenweise vollziehen kann, wobei die formgerechte und öffentliche Annahme des neuen Glaubens nur die letzte Stufe dieses Prozesses darstellt, finde ich es berechtigt, die Frage umzuformulieren und nicht mehr nach der Konfession des Verfassers zu fragen, dessen Glaube in dem Zeitraum, in dem er die Chronik schriftlich fixierte, ja im Umbruch hätte sein können, sondern eher zu erforschen, ob die ideologische Prägung der Chronik mit einem Christentum, wie wir es aus der (iberischen) Spätantike kennen, konform war.

Jedoch ist es auch klar, dass die Chronik eine Kompilation darstellt. Es wird hier mit heterogenem Material gearbeitet, und so könnte der Verdacht aufkommen, die Suche nach einer kohärenten Botschaft dieser Quelle wäre von Anfang an zum Scheitern verurteilt: der Verfasser hätte unterschiedliche Traditionen zusammengefügt, ohne ihnen eine eigene, vereinheitlichende Prägung gegeben zu haben.¹¹ Nun ist die Prämisse dieser Studie aber, dass eine solche Vorgehensweise eher selten war und das ein spätantiker oder frühmittelalterlicher Geschichtsschreiber, und sei er auch

año 1000, in: *Settimane di Studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'Alto Medioevo* 17 (1970), 113–133, scheint sich vor der Konvertiten-These zu distanzieren, jedoch richten sich seine Argumente vor allem gegen die Meinung von Dubler, der den Verfasser im spanischen Levante plazierte. R. Barkai, *Cristianos y musulmanes en la España medieval (El enemigo en el espejo)*, Rialp 1984, 17–58, schließt sich Dubler nicht an, was die religiöse Identität des Verfassers angeht; Barkai erkennt ihm zwar eine gewisse Sympathie für den Islam zu, geht aber zumeist von dessen Neutralität aus. Collins, *The Arab Conquest* (wie Anm. 4), 53–57 sieht in dem Verfasser keinen Konvertiten, sagt aber letztendlich, dass der Text kaum Schlüsse auf denselben zulasse. Christy (wie Anm. 4), 28–51 sieht in der Chronik eine probyzantinische und zugleich apokalyptische Tendenz – die Christen auf der Halbinsel sollen das Kommen des letzten Kaisers erwarten –, ohne sich allerdings mit den positiven Aussagen des Verfassers über Muhammad und die Sarazenen auseinanderzusetzen. Martín, *Los Chronica* (wie Anm. 4), bietet eine überzeugende Lektüre der Chronik: der Verfasser hätte die Absicht gehabt (ähnlich wie es einmal Eusebius und andere christlichen Autoren für das Christentum gemacht hatten), die Entstehung des Islam in einen breiteren Kontext der Weltgeschichte einzuordnen. Martín sieht in der Chronik das Werk eines Propagandisten des neuen Glaubens, möge er ein konvertierter Christ gewesen sein oder ein des Lateinischen mächtiger Autor, der das Gedankengut eines muslimischen Mäzens schriftlich fixierte. Die negative Darstellung des Westgotenreiches und Byzanz' bildet Martín zufolge einen Kontrast zur positiven Darstellung muslimischer Herrscher. Die von K. B. Reeves, *Visions of Unity after the Visigoths. Early Iberian Latin Chronicles and the Mediterranean World*, Turnhout 2016, 71–111, vorgeschlagene Auslegung der Chronik aus dem Jahr 754 ist zwar überzeugend, sie überträgt allerdings die Botschaft der jüngeren Chronik in verallgemeinernder Weise auf die ältere ohne sich mit dem zu beschäftigen, was an ihr spezifisch ist.

11 Collins, *The Arab Conquest* (wie Anm. 4), 57 schreibt: „As a whole the Chronicle of 741 is a confused and confusing work that fails to integrate the elements of which it is composed in a workmanlike and satisfying way“. Laut L. Pereira/J. Eduardo, La aportación hispana a la historiografía latina medieval, in: M. Pérez González (Hrsg.), *Actas 1. Congreso Nacional de Latín Medieval*, León 1995, 167–189, hier 180, kommt die Gedankenwelt des Verfassers in der Chronik kaum zum Ausdruck.

hauptsächlich ein Kompilator gewesen, seine (durchaus aufwändige) Arbeit nicht anfang, ohne sich der Ziele, die er verfolgen wollte, bewusst zu werden.¹² Auch wenn der Verfasser der Chronik aus dem Jahr 741 seinen Stoff nicht immer mit unbestreitbarer Kohärenz strukturierte, ist es kaum vorstellbar, dass er überhaupt kein Ziel verfolgte. Eine sorgfältige Analyse seines Werkes schließt eine solche Möglichkeit eigentlich aus, wie im Folgenden gezeigt wird.

Die Frage nach der religiösen Zugehörigkeit des Verfassers bleibt also umstritten. Dass das Religiöse an sich selten in der Chronik angesprochen wird, führte in der Forschung dazu, dass sich manche zurückhaltender äußern, ohne sich einer der sonst verflochtenen Meinungen, hinter der Chronik stehe eine pro-christliche oder pro-islamische Botschaft, anzuschließen. Diese Zurückhaltung bringt Claudia Valenzuela zum Ausdruck, indem sie behauptet, der Autor der Chronik habe sich mit dem spezifischen Glauben der Sarazenen nicht auseinandergesetzt.¹³ Differenzierter betrachtet die Frage John Tolan, der den Verfasser für einen Christen hält. Er sieht in der Chronik nicht das Werk eines Moslems, aber auch nicht die eines Verteidigers des Christentums. Stattdessen habe der Verfasser nur ein Bericht schreiben wollen, ohne der Geschichte eine theologische Deutung geben zu wollen und ohne Werturteile auszusprechen.¹⁴ Gleichwohl weiß man ja dank der vergleichenden Studien zu spätantiken Chroniken, dass deren Autoren ihre Botschaft nicht explizit ausdrücken mussten, um ihre Leser zu beeinflussen. Es existierten andere Vorgehensweisen, wie zum Beispiel eine kreative Auswahl der historischen Informationen, die schriftlich fixiert werden,¹⁵ oder die Umstrukturierung des vorhandenen Stoffes, die es ermöglicht, einige Aspekte zu betonen und andere auszublenden. Die Aufmerksamkeit der meisten Forscher, die sich mit der Chronik des Jahres 741 auseinandergesetzt haben, galt nicht nur den expliziten Aussagen des Verfassers, sondern auch den impliziten Stellungnahmen, die sich in dem Werk entdecken lassen. Das soll auch für den vorliegenden Beitrag gelten.

Die Meinung, dass in der *Chronik* eine allgemeine pro-islamische Einstimmung zum Ausdruck käme, wurde schon seit langem in der Forschung geäußert und lässt sich mit den Worten von Martín gut zusammenfassen: „Diese Chronik wurde zweifellos mit einem apologetisch-propagandistischen Zweck geschrieben, da sie für Latein lesende, das heißt christliche Leser bestimmt war“.¹⁶ Laut Martín soll der Verfasser ein zum Islam bekehrter Bewohner der Halbinsel gewesen sein, der womöglich im

¹² Vgl. Christys, *Christians in al-Andalus* (wie Anm. 4), 29.

¹³ C. Valenzuela, „Ritu Mamentiano“. Auf der Suche nach den christlichen Wahrnehmungen vom Islam in der frühmittelalterlichen Historiographie Nordspaniens, in: A. Aurast/H.-W. Goetz (Hrsg.), *Die Wahrnehmung anderer Religionen im früheren Mittelalter: terminologische Probleme und methodische Ansätze*, Berlin 2012, 121–168, hier 139.

¹⁴ J. V. Tolan, *Les Sarrasins. L'islam dans l'imagination européenne au Moyen Âge*, Paris 2003, 124–133.

¹⁵ Vgl. Christys, *Christians in al-Andalus* (wie Anm. 4), 29.

¹⁶ Martín, *Los Chronica* (wie Anm. 4), eigene Übersetzung.

Auftrag eines muslimischen Mäzens schrieb, der wiederum über ausführlichere Informationen über die Frühgeschichte Islams verfügte. Die These, dass das Bild des Islam und auch das Bild Gottes, wie sie in der Chronik vermittelt werden, sich mit dem Christentum nicht in Übereinstimmung bringen lassen, wurde in der bisherigen Forschung allerdings nicht ausreichend begründet, um die Befürworter eines christlichen Autors zu überzeugen. Da es sich um einen höchst rätselhaften Text handelt, der die Forschung zu völlig auseinandergehenden Meinungen veranlasst hat, geht es zunächst darum, die für die Einschätzung der religiösen Dimension der Chronik relevanten Stellen ausführlich zu analysieren.

Aber noch bevor man mit einer Analyse beginnt, muss auf ein Argument gegen die islamische Identität hingewiesen werden, das sich auf die Sprache, in der die Chronik verfasst wurde, bezieht und in der Forschung gewissen Widerhall hervorgerufen hat: Der Gebrauch des Lateinischen an sich soll gegen eine islamische Identität sprechen und zeigen, dass der Verfasser „in der christlichen Kultur noch zu Hause war“.¹⁷ In Antwort darauf muss es zunächst gesagt werden, dass eine Verankerung in der christlichen Kultur an sich, die Träger der lateinischen Sprache war, keineswegs gegen die Konversion zum Islam sprechen kann. Für die Vorstellung, jeder früh zum Islam Konvertierte hätte seine eigene (Literatur-) Sprache aufgeben müssen, wie es hier implizit vorausgesetzt wird, fehlen die Beweise. Durch den Gebrauch der lateinischen Sprache konnte dagegen eine Glaubenspropaganda auch diejenigen erreichen, die des Arabischen nicht mächtig waren und die die Mehrzahl der Einwohner der iberischen Halbinsel um 741 darstellten. Selbst den Eroberern war das bewusst; die durch sie zunächst in Afrika geprägten Münzen, die das auf Latein formulierte Glaubensbekenntnis *non est deus nisi unus cui no socius alius similis* trugen, sind auch für die ehemals westgotischen Gebiete gut belegt.¹⁸ Der Verfasser der Chronik wäre dann keineswegs der erste gewesen, der die lateinische Sprache in den Dienst des neuen Glaubens stellte.

Dass es allerdings nur wenige Stellen gibt, die sich direkt auf den Glauben beziehen, wurde bereits signalisiert. In zwei Kapiteln der Chronik wird auf Muhammad, der als Anführer der Sarazenen während ihrer Kämpfe mit Byzanz dargestellt wird, hingewiesen:

*Adgregata Sarracenorum copiosissima multitudo Syria, Arabiae et Mesopotamiae provincias invaserunt, supra ipsos principatum tenente Mahmet nomine, de tribu illius gentis nobilissima natus, prudens admodum vir et aliquantum futurorum provisor gestorum.*¹⁹

¹⁷ de Hartmann, Der mozarabische Blick (wie Anm. 4), 50.

¹⁸ Sanjuan, *La conquista islámica* (wie Anm. 2), 161–165.

¹⁹ *Chronica* XIII, „Die sehr zahlreiche Menge der Sarazenen, die sich gesammelt hatte, überfiel Syria und die Provinzen von Arabia und Mesopotamia unter der Führung Muhammads. Er entstammte der berühmtesten Stamm dieses Volkes und war ein sehr weiser Mann, der auch in der Lage war, manche zukünftigen Ereignisse vorherzusehen“ (eigene Übersetzung).

*Praedictus princeps Saracenorum Mahmet expletis rengi sui annis X. vitae finem accepit. Quem hactenus tanto honore et reverentia colunt, ut Dei apostolum et prophetam eum in omnibus sacramentis suis esse scriptisque adfirmant. [...]*²⁰

Es wurde behauptet, diese Abschnitte seien der einzige Grund, in dem Autor der Chronik einen Konvertiten zu sehen.²¹ Dass dies eher nicht stimmt, wird später gezeigt. Es stimmt allerdings, dass der Verfasser den Glauben der Sarazenen wie ein neutraler Berichterstatter darstellt, indem er auf die Ehre des Gottesapostels und Propheten, die sie Muhammad zuerkennen, hinweist.²² Diese Neutralität könnte eine Distanzierung bedeuten. Andererseits war eben die Distanzierung eine narrative Strategie, die es ermöglichte, bei den Lesern den Eindruck zu erwecken, die Erzählung wäre objektiv und unvoreingenommen.²³ Insofern konnte diese Strategie den Zwecken eines Autors gut entsprechen, der vorhatte, seinen Lesern eine pro-islamische Botschaft zu vermitteln, ohne sie unter Druck zu setzen.

Dass wiederum der Verfasser, wenn er in eigener Person spricht, Muhammad lediglich als *provisor* bezeichnet, ist auch kaum eindeutig.²⁴ Luis A. García Moreno, der den Verfasser für keinen Konvertiten hält, versteht dieses Wort als Hinweis darauf, dass für den Verfasser der *Continuatio Byzantia-Arabica* Muhammad die Zukunft vorhersagen konnte. García Moreno geht aber auch davon aus, dass dies keine positive Bewertung Muhammads voraussetzte und auch von einem Christen ausgesprochen worden sein könnte, weil die Gabe der Prophezeiung nicht unbedingt von Gott vergeben worden sein müsste, die Dämonen hätten es auch tun können.²⁵ Mit dieser Annahme eines nicht (zwingend) muslimischen Autor ist es aber sehr schwer vorstellbar, wie eine solche Auslegung der Passage die unmittelbar anschließenden Lobesworte des Verfassers (der wohl in eigener Person spricht) erklären könnte: *de tribu illius gentis nobilissima natus, prudens admodum vir*.²⁶ In einem solchem Kontext muss man diese Passage nicht als eine verborgene Kritik (für die sowieso jegliche Hinweise fehlen) sehen, sondern als einen dritten Teil des Lobes Muhammads. Da aber die Gabe der Zukunftsvorhersage in den zeitgenössischen muslimischen Traditionen nicht Muhammad zugeschrieben wurde, und in der lateinischen Literatur *provisor*

²⁰ *Chronica* XVII, „Der bereits erwähnte Führer der Sarazenen Muhammad verstarb nach der zehnjährigen Regierung. Die Sarazenen verehren und schätzen ihn bis jetzt dermaßen, dass sie ihn in allen ihren Mysterien und Schriften als Apostel Gottes und Prophet bekennen.“ (eigene Übersetzung).

²¹ de Hartmann, *Der mozarabische Blick* (wie Anm. 4), 49.

²² de Hartmann, *Der mozarabische Blick* (wie Anm. 4), 50.

²³ Martín, *Los Chronica* (wie Anm. 4).

²⁴ Unabhängig davon, ob er hier seine eigene Meinung äußert, oder sich jene seiner Vorlage zu eigen macht; vgl. de Hartmann, *Der mozarabische Blick* (wie Anm. 4), 50.

²⁵ L. A. García Moreno, *Elementos de tradición bizantina en dos Vidas de Mahoma mozárabes*, in: I. Pérez Martín (Hrsg.), *Bizancio y la Península Ibérica. De la Antigüedad tardía a la Edad Moderna*, Madrid 2004, 247–271, hier 256, Anm. 33.

²⁶ *Chronica* XIII.

auf einen Menschen bezogen „Verwalter“ bedeutet, schlägt Carmen Cardelle de Hartmann entsprechend vor, das Wort auch hier als Verwalter zu übersetzen.²⁷ Allerdings weist Luis A. García Moreno darauf hin, dass bereits die frühe islamische Tradition, auf die der Verfasser zugegriffen haben könnte, die Prophezeiungen Muhammads erwähnt.²⁸ Unabhängig davon, welche der beiden Übersetzungen passender ist, gibt es keinen Grund, Muhammads Funktion als *Provisor* als etwas anderes als ein drittes Glied einer positiven Äußerung zu sehen.

So wird deutlich, dass der Verfasser sich einerseits Mühe gibt, den Eindruck zu erwecken, er berichte objektiv über den Glauben der Sarazenen, aber andererseits, wenn er in eigener Person spricht, Muhammad gleich dreifach lobt, und zwar dadurch, dass er auf seine edle Herkunft (*de tribu illius gentis nobilissima natus*) und auf seine guten Eigenschaften (*prudens admodum vir et aliquantum futurorum provisor gestorum*) hinweist.²⁹ So wird es den (christlichen) Lesern der Chronik ermöglicht, Muhammad zunächst unabhängig von seiner religiösen Rolle schätzen zu lernen. Die Annahme des Verfassers, unter Stämmen der Sarazenen gebe es auch manche, die edel seien, ist insofern auffällig, als dass christliche Autoren überwiegend dazu neigten, über die Sarazenen nur Schlechtes zu berichten.³⁰ Insofern lässt sich die Schilderung auch als weiterer, dezenter Versuch, die Voreingenommenheit der Leser gegenüber den Eroberern abzubauen, lesen.

Die positive Einschätzung des Propheten, auch wenn sie relativ knapp sein mag, stellt, mit der sonstigen zeitgenössischen christlichen Literatur verglichen, ein Sondermerkmal der Chronik dar.³¹ Während andere auf Latein oder Griechisch schreibende Schriftsteller die religiöse Dimension der Eroberungen entweder ignorierten oder aber den neuen Glauben teils heftig kritisierten, schlug der Verfasser der Chronik einen ganz anderen Weg ein.

Weitere Stellen, die über die Religion (und zwar speziell über Gott) deutlicher und ohne Distanzierung sprechen, beziehen sich auf dessen Eingreifen in die Geschichte der Araber.³² Zunächst wird berichtet, dass infolge der inneren Kämpfe zwischen den Sarazenen Marwan I. (*Maroan* in der Chronik) an die Macht kommt (*deo coniuvente provehitur ad regnum*).³³

27 de Hartmann, Der mozarabische Blick (wie Anm. 4), 50, Anm. 25. Sie schreibt auch, sonst sei das Wort lediglich auf Gott als Verwalter des Universums bezogen, aber nie auf den Propheten, Martín, *Los Chronica* (wie Anm. 4) geht in seiner Übersetzung von der Zukunftsvorhersage aus: „[...] ejerciendo el principado entre ellos Mahmet, nacido en el seno de una tribu de nobilísimo linaje entre las de ese pueblo, varón muy sabio y conocedor de antemano de todo lo que había de ocurrir.“

28 García Moreno, *Elementos* (wie Anm. 25), 256, Anm. 33.

29 *Chronica* XIII.

30 Tolan, *Les Sarrasins* (wie Anm. 14), 52–53.

31 Tolan, *Les Sarrasins* (wie Anm. 14), 78–157.

32 Martín, *Los Chronica* (wie Anm. 4) spricht auch von zwei Stellen, die Gott erwähnen, die aber in den Kapiteln XXXI und XVII zu finden seien.

33 *Chronica* XXXI.

Es muss wohl so verstanden werden, dass Marwan I. mit Gottes Unterstützung seine eigene Macht zunächst gegen seinen sarazenischen Rivalen sichern konnte, um sodann eine erfolgreiche Politik zu führen, die darin bestand, den unter Umständen günstigen Frieden mit Byzanz zu schließen, aber nur deshalb, um seine Söhne mit der Mission der Fortsetzung des Krieges *contra Romaniam* (Byzanz, Anm. d. Verf.) *cunctasque finitimas nationes*³⁴ zu beauftragen.

In den darauffolgenden Kapiteln wird die Politik des Nachfolgers von Marwan I., Abd al-Malik (*Habdelmele* in der Chronik), gepriesen, ein weiterer Eingriff Gottes in der Menschengeschichte, über den die Chronik zu berichten weiß, lässt aber auf sich warten, bis der Enkel Marwans I., al-Walid I. (*Hulit* in der Chronik), an die Macht kommt.

*Sarracenorum Hulit scepra regni, secundum quod exposuerat pater eius, succedit in regnum. Regnat annis VIII, uir totius prudentiae in exponendis exercitibus, tantum cum diuino experts fauore, ut paene omnium gentium sibimet proximarum virtutem confregit. Romaniamque inter omnia assidua uastatione debilem facit. Insulas quoque prope ad consummationem deduxit. Indiae fines uastando predomuit. In occiduus quoque partibus regnum Gothorum antiqua soliditate firmatum apud Spanias per ducem sui exercitus nomine Musae adgressus edomuit et regno abiecto uestigales fecit. Sic omnia prospera gerens nonno regni anno praeuisis copiis uniuersarum gentium sibi exhibitis uitae terminum dedit.*³⁵

Die Marwan I. entgegengebrachte Unterstützung Gottes ermöglicht es seinem Enkel al-Walid I., dank göttlicher Gnade manche Gebiete zu erobern und zahlreiche Völker zu bezwingen, darunter auch das Westgotenreich. Meines Erachtens sollte man hier das Wort *expers* als *expertus* verstehen: eine Bedeutung, die in frühmittelalterlichen lateinischen Texten vorkommt.³⁶ Der für unsere Untersuchung bedeutungsvolle Satz könnte dann folgendermaßen übersetzt werden: „Er regierte 9 Jahre; ein Mann mit den größtmöglichen militärischen Fähigkeiten, und dazu einer, der dermaßen die Gunst Gottes genoss, dass er die militärische Macht fast aller Nachbarvölker in ihren Territorien bezwang“. Natürlich weist das Wort *expers* meist auf einen Mangel hin. Der Kontext, in dem diese Aussage fällt, spricht aber dafür, den Satzteil *tantum cum*

³⁴ *Chronica* XXXI.

³⁵ *Chronica* XXXVI, „Al-Walid übernahm die Herrschaft über das Reich der Sarazenen, so wie es sein Vater gewollt hatte. Er regierte 9 Jahre; ein Mann mit den größtmöglichen militärischen Fähigkeiten, und dazu einer, der dermaßen die Gunst Gottes genoss, dass er die militärische Macht fast aller Nachbarvölker in ihren Territorien bezwang. Und nämlich machte er mit seinen kontinuierlichen Angriffen das Römerreich schwach, die Insel brachte er bis an die Grenze der Zerstörung. Er verwüstete und unterwarf Indien. Auch im Westen bezwang er völlig durch den Anführer seines Heeres Mursa das in Hispanien längst stark gewordene Gotenreich. Die Herrschaft der Goten schuf er ab und gliederte diese in seinen Verwaltungsbereich ein. Nach der neunjährigen, in jeder Hinsicht erfolgreichen Regierung, als er bereits zahlreiche Menschen aus allen Völker [die er bezwungen hatte] gesehen hatte, starb er.“ (eigene Übersetzung).

³⁶ V.g. *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* (TLL) Online s.v. *expers*.

diuino expers fauore als einen weiteren Grund (neben seinen militärischen Fähigkeiten) für den Erfolg al-Walids I. zu sehen. Darüber hinaus lässt sich *tantum cum diuino expers fauore* auch nur recht schwierig mit „auch wenn er die Gunst Gottes nicht genoss“ übersetzen.³⁷ Die parallele Aussage aus der Chronik aus dem Jahr 754 (*in tantum cum diuino expers fabore [ut] paene omnium gentium sibimet proximarum virtutem confregit*)³⁸ wird im Rahmen einer ganz anderen, streng christlichen Geschichtsdeutung gemacht – bei dem Verfasser dieser Chronik handelt es sich zweifellos um einen engagierten Christen, der auch viel Schlechtes sowohl über Musa wie auch über al-Walid I. zu berichten weiß.³⁹ Solche negativen Angaben sind der Chronik aus dem Jahr 741 fremd. Darüber hinaus kann der Verfasser der jüngeren Chronik das Wort *expers* anders verstanden haben als sein früher schreibender „Fachkollege“, und zwar auf eine solche Art und Weise, dass die Übersetzung, die bei der Chronik aus dem Jahr 754 von ihrer christlichen Botschaft her wohl zwingend ist („auch wenn er die Gunst Gottes nicht genoss, bezwang er die militärische Macht fast aller Nachbarvölker in ihren Territorien“), für diejenige des Jahres 741 ungerechtfertigt zu sein scheint. In einer Zeit, in der der Sprachgebrauch nicht stabil war, erscheint diese Erklärung plausibel. Bedenkt man, dass in der Chronik aus dem Jahr 754 die in der Chronik aus dem Jahr 741 positiv konnotierten Aussagen über Muhammad nicht zu finden sind, und dass die parallelen Stellen Kritik am Propheten beinhalten, so ist es nicht unwahrscheinlich, dass der Autor der jüngeren Chronik den oben besprochen Satz (unabhängig davon, ob er ihn in einer anderen Quelle, aus der auch sein „Fachkollege“ schöpfte, oder direkt in dessen Chronik vorfand)⁴⁰ anders als seine Quelle verstanden hat – eben als einen als Kritik gemeinten Hinweis für die mangelnde Gunst Gottes – und ihn deswegen unverändert in seine Chronik aufnahm.

An beiden Stellen in der Chronik, an denen etwas über das Wirken Gottesausgesagt wird, wird Gott als Förderer der Sarazenen gezeigt. Auch wenn das erste Eingreifen Gottes im Kontext eines inneren Streits geschieht, lässt das, was auf darauf folgt, klar den Anteil Gottes am Schicksal (so, wie er in der Chronik dargestellt wird), deutlich erkennen: Marwan I. setzt sich durch, da die Richtung, die er seiner Politik geben würde, von Gott gutgeheißen worden ist. Im Kapitel 36 bleibt kein Raum mehr für Zweifel: die Eroberung mancher Teile der Erde, und auch des Westgotenreichs, geschieht deshalb, weil der Mann, der über die Araber herrscht, die Gnade Gottes im Überfluss genießt.

37 So bei Martín, *Los Chronica* (wie Anm. 4): „Fue un varón de una gran sabiduría a la hora de desplegar sus tropas, hasta tal punto que, aun viéndose privado del favor divino, destruyó los ejércitos de casi todos los pueblos vecinos a él“.

38 *Chronica muzarabica* (wie Anm. 9), 15–54, hier Kap. XLII.

39 *Chronica muzarabica* (wie Anm. 9), Kap. XLVI–XLVII.

40 Gegen die Verwendung der Chronik von 741 durch den Autor derer des Jahres 754 argumentiert J. E. López Pereira, *Estudio crítico sobre la Crónica Mozárabe de 754*, Zaragoza 1980, 96–99.

Zweifellos gibt es hier keinen expliziten Aufruf zur Bekehrung. Es steht aber außer Frage, dass die Gnade Gottes, die die Eroberer begleitet und die (im spirituellen Bereich) die Ursache des Untergangs des Westgotenreiches ist, rückwirkend auch die Religion der Eroberer und ihren Propheten legitimiert. Zwar waren manche der spätantiken und frühmittelalterlichen Christen bereit, ihre militärischen Niederlagen als Strafe Gottes für ihre Sünde zu verstehen (sogar in Bezug auf den Aufstieg der Araber). Allerdings fehlt den Versuchen, die eindeutig positive Darstellung der Interventionen Gottes zu Gunsten der neuen Religion einem Christen zuschreiben zu wollen, jede Grundlage. Nach den spätantik- christlichen Vorstellungen war nämlich die Geschichte durch göttliche Vorsehung geleitet.⁴¹ Wenn der Verfasser der Chronik des Jahres 754 die Erfolge der arabischen Eroberer gegen Byzanz und die Zerstörung des Westgotenreiches eindeutig negativ (als Strafe Gottes für die Christen), und eben nur in Bezug auf Christen (Gott verwendet die Muslime nicht, weil er für sie große Zukunftspläne hat, sondern nur als Instrument seiner Strafe, wobei die Christen im Mittelpunkt stehen) sieht, so gilt für die *Continuatio Byzantia-Arabica* das Gegenteil.⁴² Hier wendet sich Gott den Muslimen zu und fördert sie. Die Möglichkeit, dass ein gebildeter Christ im Stande gewesen wäre, die Eroberer, die einem neuen Prophet folgen, als gottgesegnet darzustellen, ohne mit der christlichen Theologie seiner Zeit vollständig zu brechen, sehe ich nicht als gegeben an.⁴³ Das Kommen eines neuen, positiv eingeschätzten Propheten sprengte nämlich den theologischen Rahmen des spätantiken Christentums. Der Verfasser der Chronik aus dem Jahr 754 sah sich womöglich zur Unterbetonung der religiösen Dimension der Eroberung durch seine Theologie verpflichtet: das seit der Antike geltende, auch bei Johannes von Biclaro zu findende Schema der „Siegestheologie“ zwang die, die daran glaubten, in denjenigen, die aus militärischen Auseinandersetzungen als Sieger hervorgingen waren, auch die Träger der korrekten Theologie anzuerkennen.⁴⁴ Indem der Verfasser der älteren Chronik die Unterstützung Gottes, die die Eroberer genießen, hervorhob, schlug er genau den Weg ein, den sein jüngerer Fachkollege zu vermeiden suchte.

Wir haben die Stellen, die mit dem Religiösen zu tun haben, gesehen. Sie bieten eine Geschichtsvision an, die mit den christlichen Vorstellungen nicht vereinbar ist. Bevor wir die Frage nach der Überzeugungskraft dieser Geschichtsvision genauer un-

41 Vgl. Sanjuan, *La conquista islámica* (wie Anm. 2), 33–34.

42 Laut Christys, *Christians in al-Andalus* (wie Anm. 4), 34, beinhaltet die Chronik von 754 die Botschaft, dass auch die iberischen Christen durch ihre Sünde ihren Anteil an der Eroberung Spaniens tragen. Der Ursprung dieser auf die christliche Verantwortung bezogenen Deutung der Eroberungen ist im christlichen Osten zu finden (Sanjuan (wie Anm. 2), 34). Zum Providentialismus in der Chronik von 754 vgl. J. E. López Pereira, *La aportación hispana a la historiografía latina medieval*, in: Pérez González, *Actas* (Hrsg., wie Anm. 11), 167–189, hier 180–181.

43 Manche Ungebildeten dagegen hätten den Islam als eine christliche Glaubensrichtung sehen können; vgl. Sanjuan, *La conquista islámica* (wie Anm. 2), 137.

44 Vgl. K. B. Wolf, *Conquerors and Chroniclers of Early Medieval Spain*, Liverpool 1990, 43.

tersuchen, muss auf die Argumente gegen eine pro-islamische Botschaft der Chronik eingegangen werden.

Die Befürworter einer islamischen Identität des Verfassers sind, wenig überraschend, bei denjenigen Forschern auf Kritik gestoßen, die in ihm einen Christen sehen wollen. Ein Argument für die christliche Identität des Verfassers soll die Tatsache sein, dass der Aufstieg des Islam als eine Rebellion dargestellt wird.⁴⁵ Diese Meinung lässt sich aber nicht halten, nicht nur, weil sie einen in der Chronik keineswegs erwähnten Zustand voraussetzt, dass nämlich die Sarazenen früher unter Byzantinischer Herrschaft gewesen seien, aber erweist sich auch deswegen als unbegründet, weil das von dem Verfasser verwendete Wort *rebellare*⁴⁶ von seinem Kontext her nicht als negativ konnotiert verstanden werden kann und überhaupt nicht als „rebellieren“ übersetzt werden sollte, sondern einfach einen Terminus für „Krieg gegen jemanden führen“ darstellt. Zusätzlich soll es auf die Bedeutung des entsprechenden lateinischen Wortes im frühmittelalterlichen iberischen Schrifttum hingewiesen werden. In den *Chronica Albeldensia* wird der glorreiche und zugleich siegreiche Befreiungskampf, den der sagenhafte König Asturiens, Pelayo, gegen die Araber führte, ebenfalls mithilfe dieses Wortes bezeichnet.⁴⁷ Wäre dieses Wort für den Verfasser dieser Chronik negativ konnotiert gewesen, hätte er sicherlich einen besseren Ausdruck ausgesucht, um über die Heldentaten des Protoplasten der Dynastie, unter deren Herrschaft er lebte und die er bewusst lobte, zu berichten. Nicht nur das Verb *rebellare*, sondern auch der Substantiv *rebellio* konnten zum Träger positiver Urteile werden. Von demselben Pelayo wird berichtet, dass er eine „Rebellion“ gegen die Sarazenen führte.⁴⁸

In demselben Kapitel der in diesem Beitrag untersuchten Chronik in dem sich das Wort *rebellare* befindet, wird berichtet, dass die Sarazenen die römischen Provinzen angriffen *furtim magis quam publicis obreptionibus* („eher verstoßen als in offenen

45 So Barkai, *Cristianos y musulmanes* (wie Anm. 10), 55, Anm. 2., und R. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It. A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*, Princeton 1997, 425.

46 *Chronica* XII.

47 *Chronica Albeldensia* XIV.33: *Et dum idem Wittiza regnum patris accepit, Pelagium filium Fafilanis, qui postea Sarracenis cum Astures reuellauit [...], ab hurbe regia expulit* („Und als Witiza das Reich seines Vaters übernommen hatte, vertrieb er Pelayos, den Sohn Fafilas aus der königlichen Stadt. Dieser Pelayos rebellierte später als Anführer Asturiens gegen die Sarazenen.“ eigene Übersetzung). Fernerhin *Chronica Albeldensia* XV.1: *Pelagius [...] postquam a Sarracenis Spania occupata est, iste primum contra eis sumsit reuellionem in Asturias [...] ex tunc reddita est libertas populo Xpiano* („Pelayos, nachdem sich die Sarazenen Hispaniens bemächtigt hatten, rebellierte als erste gegen sie in Asturien. Damals wurde das Christenvolk wieder frei.“ eigene Übersetzung). Die Zitate folgen der Edition J. Gil Fernández et al. (Hrsg.), *Crónicas asturianas: Crónica de Alfonso III (Rotense y „A Sebastián“); Crónica Albeldense (y „Profética“)*, Oviedo 1985.

48 *Chronica Albeldensia* (wie Anm. 47), XV.1. Diese Chronik soll um 881 geschrieben worden sein, basiert aber auf wesentlich älteren Grundlagen (Gil Fernández, *Crónicas asturianas*, 33–34).

Schlachten“, eigene Übersetzung). Die Vokabel *furtim* muss aber keine negative Konnotation für den Verfasser getragen haben, der damit die Ausbeutung der römischen Gebiete im Gegensatz zu offenen Schlachten (die später folgen sollten) meinte und nicht etwa die Sarazenen als Diebe charakterisieren wollte. Die Ausbeutung musste ihm legitim erscheinen. Die potentiell negative Konnotation des Wortes *furtim* würde im Widerspruch zu der eindeutig positiven Darstellung des Muhammad stehen, der, wie der Leser im nächsten Kapitel erfährt,⁴⁹ an der Spitze der Angreifer gestanden haben soll.

Es wurde auch behauptet, ein Konvertit hätte den Ausdruck „Sarazenen“ nicht gebraucht, um über die Eroberer zu sprechen.⁵⁰ Allerdings werden in der Chronik von 741 die Wörter *Sarraceni*, *Hismaelitae* und *Arabes* vollkommen synonym verwendet.⁵¹ Die Abwesenheit der Wörter, die die islamische Religion bezeichnen (Islam, Muslimen etc.) überrascht dagegen nicht, da sie in den westlichen Quellen vor dem 16. Jahrhundert bis auf wenige Ausnahmen nicht vorkommen.⁵²

Dass das im Islam übliche, auf Muhammad bezogene Segnungs-Bittgebet *Salawat* in der Chronik nicht erwähnt wird, ist auch kein gültiges Argument gegen die islamische Identität des Verfassers. Einerseits wäre es naiv, zu erwarten, dass diese Formel sich in allen von den Muslimen eroberten Gebieten zur Entstehungszeit der Chronik bereits endgültig als verbindlich nicht nur für das Gebet, sondern auch als Einleitungsformel beim Schreiben literarischer Texte zwingend durchgesetzt hatte. Ferner liegt es nahe, dass der Verfasser der Chronik, der in Religionsfragen immer sehr diskret blieb, auf seine Leserschaft nicht durch einen zu eindeutigen Sprachgebrauch befremdlich wirken wollte.

Das Argument, die Chronik sei ihren christlichen Lesern „sufficiently orthodox“ erschienen, um kopiert zu werden, berücksichtigt jedoch nicht die Tatsache, dass im Laufe der Zeit christliche Kopisten viele Werke kopiert haben, nicht nur solche, die von der damals herrschenden christlichen Orthodoxie abwichen (wie die Kirchengeschichte des „Arianers“ Philostorgios), sondern auch solche, die sogar ausgesprochen christenfeindlich waren.⁵³ Das geschah auch im Falle des Zosimos, dessen Werk, wie auch die *Continuatio Byzantia-Arabica*, die Geschichtsschreibung vertritt. Andererseits ist es auch nicht sicher, dass die Chronik manchen Christen orthodox genug erschien. Über den direkten Überlieferungskontext (die Handschrift, die viele Geschichtswerke beinhaltet) hinaus wissen wir nur wenig über die Rezeption der beiden lateinischen Chroniken, und das, was wir wissen, bezieht sich auf die eindeutig christliche Chronik aus dem Jahre 754, die man wo-

⁴⁹ *Chronica* XIII.

⁵⁰ Barkai, *Cristianos y musulmanes* (wie Anm. 10), 55, Anm. 2.

⁵¹ Sanjuan, *La conquista islámica* (wie Anm. 2), 304–305. Barkai, *Cristianos y musulmanes* (wie Anm. 10), 21, übersieht das einmal in der Chronik von 741 vorkommende Wort *Arabes*.

⁵² Tolan, *Les Sarrasins* (wie Anm. 14), 16.

⁵³ Christys, *Christians in al-Andalus* (wie Anm. 4), 32.

möglich tatsächlich hoch schätzte.⁵⁴ Ein Grund dafür kann wohl auch gewesen sein, dass manche christlichen Leser die ideologische Fremdheit der Chronik zu verstehen wussten.

Auf die Bemerkung von Collins, mit der er die Behandlung der islamischen Religion in den beiden mozarabischen Chroniken erklärt, es sei unter islamischer Herrschaft lebensgefährlich, den Propheten in der Öffentlichkeit zu beschimpfen, muss man wiederum entgegenen, dass einerseits die Chronik von 754 eine allgemeine, auch ihren Anführer Muhammad einschließende Kritik (oder sogar Beschimpfung) beinhaltet,⁵⁵ andererseits aber der Frucht, womöglich für ein *Crimen maiestatis* zum Tode verurteilt zu werden, den Autor der Chronik von 741 keineswegs dazu verpflichtete, über Muhammad dezidiert gut zu schreiben.

Christys legt die Chronik als Botschaft für die von Muslimen eroberten Christen aus: man solle noch kurz warten, bis die Wende kommt. Sie glaubt, in der Chronik eine Sympathie für Byzanz entdecken zu können, und sieht die Schilderung der Geschichte der byzantinisch-arabischen Kämpfe⁵⁶ als einen langen Prolog zum vorletzten Kapitel, der den fränkischen Sieg über die Muslime schildert. Collins (der selbst die Meinung vertritt, dass die von ihm der hypothetischen Quellen der Chronik, der lateinischen *Historia Arabum*, zugewiesene Aussage über den Islam, die sich in der Chronik von 741 entdecken lasse, auf einen christlichen Autor hinweise)⁵⁷ geht aber davon aus, dass die letzten beiden Kapitel wahrscheinlich später entstanden sind und dem Werk nicht durch den ursprünglichen Verfasser hinzugefügt wurden, weil er glaubt, dass sie aus dem chronologischen Zusammenhang gerissen seien und auch den Haupttendenzen des Werkes widersprächen.⁵⁸

54 de Hartmann, Der mozarabische Blick (wie Anm. 4), 56–59. Eine Muhammad-Vita, die Bischof Eulogius 848 in einem Kloster las, kann einer der beiden Chroniken entstammt haben (de Hartmann, Der mozarabische Blick (wie Anm. 4), 59).

55 In der *Chronica Muzarabica* IV werden die Araber als Wüsteratten (*muribus heremi*) bezeichnet, die sehr kritischen Äußerungen bezüglich der arabischen Eroberungen und der durch die Eroberer eingesetzten Mittel die diese Chronik beinhaltet kontrastieren stark mit der neutralen Beschreibung der Chronik von 741. Vgl. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam* (wie Anm. 45), 427. Zu den Unterschieden in den Darstellungen Muhammads und der Muslime, die die beiden Chroniken aufweisen, vgl. Christys, *Christians in al-Andalus* (wie Anm. 4), 43, Barkai, *Cristianos y musulmanes* (wie Anm. 10), 22–23.

56 Ferner zeigt Christys, *Christians in al-Andalus* (wie Anm. 4), dass der Verfasser der Chronik 741 jene Aussagen seiner iberischen Quellen, die das Lob westgotischer Herrscher beinhalteten, ausgeblendet hat. Unter anderem habe er auf die Beschreibung der militärischen Siege der Westgoten gegen Byzanz verzichtet, da er in Ostrom einen Verbündeten gegen die Araber gesehen habe (Christys, *Christians in al-Andalus* (wie Anm. 4), 36–38). Diese Erklärung ignoriert aber, dass der Verfasser alles Gute aus der westgotischen Geschichte und nicht nur das, was der Zusammenarbeit mit Byzanz im Wege stehen konnte, weggelassen hat; auf das positive Bild der Eroberer wurde bereits eingegangen.

57 Collins, *The Arab Conquest* (wie Anm. 4), 56.

58 Collins, *The Arab Conquest* (wie Anm. 4), 54–55. Dazu kritisch: Hoyland, *Seeing Islam* (wie Anm. 45), 426, Anm. 124: „[Collins] infers that the text must date to 744 or that the final notice was added later, not realising that the accession of Walid II after Hisham (d. 743) was pre-arranged by Yazid II. Collins' discussion of the text [...] is nevertheless very helpful“.

Man könnte behaupten, das vorletzte Kapitel, wenn man es als integrale Bestandteil des Werkes betrachtet, orientiere die Erzählung um, die jetzt in den Sieg der Christen zu münden scheint. Der Verfasser verschweigt allerdings das Unschöne in der islamischen Geschichte (wie etwa innere Kämpfe und vereitelte Feldzüge) nicht. Insofern unterscheidet sich dieses Kapitel von dem restlichen Werk nur dadurch, dass es das vorletzte in dieser Chronik ist. Auf jeden Fall fehlt der Chronik von 741 eine deutliche, stark betonte Endung (anders als die von 754), was Robert G. Hoyland zur Frage veranlasste, ob der uns heute verfügbare Text der Chronik vollständig ist.⁵⁹ Allerdings führt das auf die Beschreibung der verlorenen Schlacht folgende Kapitel klar vor Augen, dass die Niederlage gegen die Franken keinen Wendepunkt markiert: die Geschichte geht weiter, auf einen muslimischen Herrscher folgt ein anderer. Wenn das Ende der Chronik eine positive Botschaft trägt, dann bestimmt keine christliche, sondern es zeigt sich höchstens, dass die Macht der Muslime trotz möglicher Niederlagen weiterhin besteht. Insofern gilt auch für die Chronik von 741 das, was Christys allein in der längeren und über das Jahr 741 (743) hinausreichenden Chronik von 754 sieht: die Eroberer würden auch in der Zukunft die Herrscher Spaniens bleiben.⁶⁰

Weniger differenziert als Christys, die in den zwei Chroniken unterschiedliche Botschaften sieht, setzt sich Reeves mit den beiden lateinischen Chroniken auseinander.⁶¹ Dass die Chronik von 754 eine Endzeitsprache spricht wird überzeugend gezeigt, der Versuch, der Chronik von 741 eine ähnliche Botschaft zuzuschreiben, wird allerdings kaum begründet: die ältere Chronik wird in den Erklärungen mit der jüngeren vermischt. Am prägnantesten wird es da sichtbar,⁶² wo Reeves unter den Ausdrücken aus der Chronik des Jahres 741 auch die aus ihrem Zusammenhang gerissene Phrase *Sarracenorum copiosissima multitudo* („die sehr zahlreiche Menge der Sarazenen“) einführt, die sie als in der christlich geprägten Endzeitsprache verfasst betrachtet ohne zu berücksichtigen, dass auf diese Phrase Lob Muhammads direkt anknüpft.⁶³

Das Schweigen des Verfassers, was die Religion angeht, die man auch als ein Argument gegen seine Konversion verwendet hat (laut Robert G. Hoyland hätte ein Konvertit bestimmt über seinen Glauben erzählen wollen),⁶⁴ bezieht sich nicht nur auf die (christliche) Religion, sondern auch auf die Geschichte der Halbinsel. Nachdem er ein negatives Bild der westgotischen Monarchie gezeichnet hat, schenkt er späteren Ereignissen auf der Halbinsel keine Aufmerksamkeit mehr. Dieser Mangel an Interesse kontrastiert stark mit der bisherigen Tradition der iberischen Geschichtsschrei-

⁵⁹ Hoyland, *Seeing Islam* (wie Anm. 45), 426.

⁶⁰ Vgl. Christys, *Christians in al-Andalus* (wie Anm. 4), 46–47.

⁶¹ Reeves, *Visions* (wie Anm. 10), 71–111.

⁶² Reeves, *Visions* (wie Anm. 10), 101.

⁶³ *Chronica* XIII.

⁶⁴ Hoyland, *Seeing Islam* (wie Anm. 45), 426.

bung, die entweder die traurige Lage der Hispanoromanen nach der Eroberung der Halbinseln durch die Barbaren beklagte (Hydatius),⁶⁵ oder auf die Rolle des Westgotenreiches als Partner von Byzanz hinwies (Johannes von Biclaro),⁶⁶ oder aber das glückliche Zusammenfließen der zum *Katholizismus* konvertierten Goten und der Hispanoromanen besang (Isidor von Sevilla).⁶⁷ Kurzgefasst: den Iberern der Spätantike waren *res Hispanicae* wichtig. Das Gegenteil gilt für den Verfasser der *Continuatio Byzantia-Arabica*. Das wurde in der Forschung schon angemerkt und als ein Argument gegen die Konversion des Verfassers gedeutet: ein vor Kurzem konvertierter Muslim hätte sicherlich viel lieber die Eroberung der Halbinsel und die Ereignisse, die seither stattgefunden hatten, erzählen wollen.⁶⁸ Bedenkt man aber, dass sich die Erzählung nach den unabhängigen Machtzentren richtet, so wird dieses Schweigen einfacher zu erklären: mit der muslimischen Eroberung endet die spezifisch iberische Geschichte,⁶⁹ die Geschichte der Umayyaden wird nun zur Leitstruktur der Ereignisse, die auf der Halbinsel passieren. Der Beginn dieser neuen Leitgeschichte wird dagegen deutlich und sogar voller Pathos beschrieben:

*In occiduís quouque partibus [Hulit] regnum Gothorum antiqua soliditate firmatum apud Spanias per duces sui exercitus nomine Musae adgressus edomuit et regno abiecto uestigales fecit.*⁷⁰

Dementsprechend spricht auch der geographische Schwerpunkt der Chronik eine persuasive Sprache. Die bisherige iberische Geschichtsschreibung bewahrte eine iberozentrische Perspektive oder zeigte mindestens ein erhebliches Interesse für die lokale Geschichte; das, was außerhalb der Halbinsel passierte, verankerten die Erzählungen im breiten Kontext. Nun aber ist Hispanien in unserer Chronik selbst zu einem Kontext geworden, der die muslimischen Eroberungen besser verstehen lässt. Die Chronik des Jahres 741, die man auf der eroberten Halbinsel las, vermittelte dementsprechend die Perspektive der Eroberer. Indem der sich der lateinischen Sprache bedienende, christlich erzogene Verfasser sich diese Perspektive der durch Gott gesegneten Sieger zu eigen machte, zeigte er auch seinen christlichen Lesern implizit den Weg.

Die explizite Erinnerung an Details der Eroberung hingegen musste manchen christlichen Lesern, die sie persönlich als einschneidende Zäsur im Leben erlebt hatten, besonders unangenehm gewesen sein. Diese Erinnerungen hervorzuheben und

⁶⁵ Vgl. López Pereira, *Estudio crítico* (wie Anm. 40), 175.

⁶⁶ J. C. Martín, La Crónica Universal de Isidoro de Sevilla: circunstancias históricas e ideológicas de su composición y traducción de la misma, *Iberia* 4 (2001), 199–239, hier 201; López Pereira, *Estudio crítico* (wie Anm. 40), 179.

⁶⁷ Martín, La Crónica Universal (wie Anm. 66), 201.

⁶⁸ Barkai, *Cristianos y musulmanes* (wie Anm. 10), 55, Anm. 2. García Moreno, Elementos (wie Anm. 25), 257–258, sieht darin auch das Argument gegen die iberische Herkunft der Chronik.

⁶⁹ de Hartmann, Der mozarabische Blick (wie Anm. 4), 60–61.

⁷⁰ *Chronica XXXVI*, „Auch im Westen bezwang er völlig durch den Anführer seines Heeres Mursa das in Hispanien längst stark gewordene Gotenreich. Die Herrschaft der Goten schuf er ab und gliederte diese in seinen Verwaltungsbereich ein.“ (eigene Übersetzung).

ins Gedächtnis zu rufen, hätte keinem Zweck gedient. Wäre der Verfasser ein von seinem Glauben überzeugter Christ gewesen, ist unklar, was ihn von der Schilderung der Eroberung hätte abhalten sollen. Die Aufmerksamkeit und die Loyalität eines sich nach der westgotischen Vergangenheit sehnenden Christ hätte all dem, was vom alten Hispanien übriggeblieben war, und was neue Hoffnungen wecken konnte, am meisten gelten müssen. In diesem Sinne schrieb der anonyme Autor der Chronik des Jahres 754, mit der auch die lange (nicht nur in den von Muslimen kontrollierten Gebieten, sondern auch im Königreich Asturien fortgesetzte) Tradition der Klagen über die Zerstörung Hispaniens durch die muslimischen Barbaren ihren Anfang fand.⁷¹ Die Zerstörung von Hispanien zu beklagen, den Untergang des Westgotenreiches aus christlich-moralischer Sicht auszudeuten, aber auch die Hoffnung auf eine Wiedereroberung zu erwecken, so verstanden die christlichen Geschichtsschreiber ihre Aufgabe und so hätte sie auch der Verfasser der *Continuatio Byzantia-Arabica* aller Wahrscheinlichkeit nach verstanden, hätte er denn eine christliche Botschaft vermitteln wollen.

Der Verfasser schildert zwar mit einer eindeutig pro-islamischen Parteinahme die Kriege, die muslimische Eroberer gegen die Christen im Osten führten, verzichtet aber auf die direkte Konfrontation der beiden Glaubenssysteme. Seine Strategie wird noch deutlicher, wenn man sein relatives Schweigen über die Religion mit den Informationen anderer Werke vergleicht, die er selbst gelesen hatte und deren Kenntnisse auch von den Lesern seiner Chronik zu erwarten war. Am einfachsten kann am Beispiel der Chronik des Johannes von Biclaro, an die unsere Chronik anknüpft, gezeigt werden, zu welcher Interpretation der christlichen Chroniken die Leser der *Continuatio Byzantia-Arabica* angeleitet wurden.

Bereits im zweiten Kapitel der Chronik des Johannes von Biclaro erscheint das Christentum als eine zersplitterte Religion, in der die kirchlichen Fraktionen mit ihren konkurrierenden Glaubensbekenntnissen miteinander kämpfen.⁷² Es existieren innerhalb des Christentums „Sekten“, die über konkurrierenden kirchlichen Hierarchien verfügen. Die dogmatischen Änderungen in der arianischen Lehre überzeugten viele Katholiken, die ihren Glauben wechselten.⁷³ Johannes von Biclaro bezeichnet den Grund für diese Bekehrungen (die aus seinem Sicht der Abfall vom wahren Glauben waren) als *cupiditas*, sein Bericht aber erweckt den Eindruck, dass diese Katholiken dank der dogmatischen Reformen die arianische Kirche als ihr religiöses Zuhause anerkennen konnten. Beide Deutungen stellen den Christen ein schlechtes Zeugnis aus: entweder sind sie bereit, ihre Doktrinen zu manipulieren, oder verlassen sie ihren alten Glauben aus niederen Gründen. Es ist natürlich nicht so, dass die Chronik

⁷¹ Sanjuan, *La conquista islámica* (wie Anm. 2), 30–35.

⁷² Iohannes Biclairensis, *Chronicon* II, bei C. Cardelle de Hartmann/R. Collins (Hrsg.), *Victoris Tunnunensis Chronicon: cum reliquiis ex Consularibus Caesaraugustanis et Iohannis Biclairensis Chronicon*, Turnhout 2001.

⁷³ Iohannes Biclairensis, *Chronicon* (wie Anm. 72), LVII.

des Johannes von Biclaro keine positiv gewerteten Informationen über das Christentum beinhaltet, wie zum Beispiel der Übergang des Königs samt anderer „Arianer“ zur Orthodoxie.⁷⁴ Allerdings kontrastiert eben diese Vielfalt der christlichen Glaubensrichtungen, die Johannes erwähnt (und die keineswegs auf den „Arianismus“ und „Katholizismus“ begrenzt ist⁷⁵) negativ mit dem Islam, der in *Continuatio Byzantia-Arabica* als religiös einheitlich erscheint.

Darüber hinaus schildert Johannes von Biclaro, wie die Religion den Konflikt zwischen christlichen Armeniern und „heidnischen“ Persern auslöste; der Leser der *Continuatio Byzantia-Arabica*, wusste aber, dass diese beiden Gegner vom Islam besiegt wurden und dass die in der Chronik des Johannes von Biclaro geschilderte Bekehrung der Perser zum Christentum ihre Niederlage gegen die Araber⁷⁶ und ihren endgültigen Untergang nicht verhindern konnte.⁷⁷ Für den Leser der Chronik aus dem Jahr 741, der sie als eine Fortsetzung des Texts des Johannes von Biclaro liest und die Nachricht über die Konversion der Perser rezipiert, ist der Sieg der Araber über die Perser noch ein aussagekräftigeres Zeugnis, dass Gott die Muslime in ihrem Kampf gegen die Christen unterstützt.

Leovigild, der christliche Herrscher Hispaniens eroberte eine Festung dank Verat.⁷⁸ Aber auch die ‚ehrlicheren‘ militärischen Triumphe der schon zum Katholizismus konvertierten Westgoten mussten sich im Nachhinein als zweideutig erweisen. Johannes von Biclaro berichtet nämlich, dass die Westgoten die ebenso katholischen Franken mit Gottes Hilfe besiegen konnten.⁷⁹ Der christliche Gott schämt sich offensichtlich nicht, in einen Krieg zwischen Christen einzugreifen, wobei er die rezenten Konvertiten zu bevorzugen scheint. Die Franken hingegen werden mit den von Israeliten besiegtten alttestamentarischen Heiden verglichen.⁸⁰ Dieser Sieg, den Johannes so feiert, muss aus der Perspektive der im eroberten Hispanien lebenden Christen des 8. Jahrhunderts wohl anders ausgesehen haben: ihr Gott war offensichtlich nicht imstande, seine Schützlinge dauerhaft zu unterstützen. Die Eroberung Hispaniens war dagegen für den Verfasser der Chronik von 741 das Ergebnis des Eingreifens Gottes in die Geschichte des Islam: sogar die inneren Kämpfe um die Macht im islamischen Lager änderten nichts daran, dass Gott eine Herrscherlinie bevorzugt hatte, deren Vertreter auch für die Eroberung Spaniens verantwortlich waren.

74 Johannes Biclaensis, *Chronicon* (wie Anm. 72), LXXXIV.

75 Johannes Biclaensis, *Chronicon* (wie Anm. 72), XCI.

76 Die Chronik aus dem Jahr 741 berichtet von der arabischen Eroberung persischer Gebiete (*Chronica* XVII, XXI und XXIII).

77 In der Chronik wird Persien als fester Bestandteil des arabischen Reiches betrachtet (*Chronica* XXXI).

78 Johannes Biclaensis, *Chronicon* (wie Anm. 72), XVII.

79 Johannes Biclaensis, *Chronicon* (wie Anm. 72), XVII.

80 Johannes Biclaensis, *Chronicon* (wie Anm. 72).

Die Kluft zwischen der Darstellung des Johannes von Biclaro und der Wirklichkeit des untergegangenen Westgotenreiches bildete einen guten Anknüpfungspunkt für die Überzeugungsstrategie des Verfassers der *Continuatio Byzantia-Arabica*, dessen in der Chronik zum Ausdruck kommendes Gedankengut ihn deutlich außerhalb der Grenzen des spätantiken Christentums verortete. Von der christlichen Orthodoxie entfernt, sah er sich trotzdem als ein Fortsetzer der bisherigen, von den Christen gepflegten Historiographie. Auf den Gebrauch gewöhnlicher Erklärungsmuster, mit denen Christen geschichtliche Niederlagen zu aufarbeiten versuchten – die Endzeitgedanken oder die Invasion als die Strafe für die sündhafte Christenheit – hat er hingegen verzichtet. Er ging allerdings nicht zum Frontalangriff über. Statt direkt das Christentum anzugreifen, was wohl seine christlichen Leser hätte verärgern können, entschied er sich für Anspielungen und indirekte Kritik. Er kontrastierte die Vision der schwachen christlichen Herrschaft mit dem siegreichen Fortschritt des Islam, nicht ohne seine Objektivität zu betonen, indem er über die Muslime und ihren Glauben in der dritten Person sprach, nur um später seine wahre Meinung, Gott sei auf der Seite der Muslime, zu enthüllen. Die Leser sollten die Schlüsse daraus für sich selbst ziehen.

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